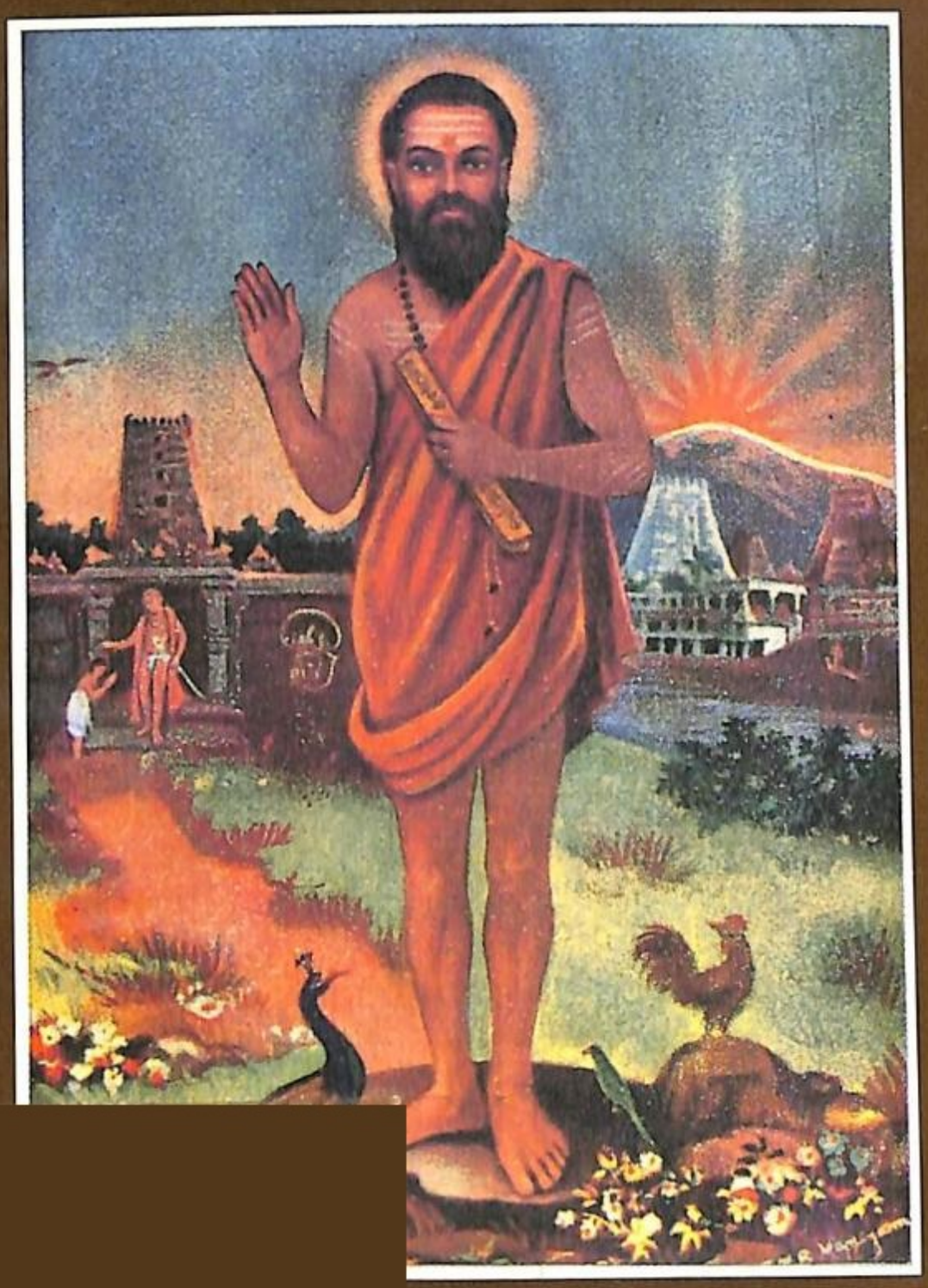
GRANDEUR OF THIRUPPUGAZH

THE HALLOWED HYMNS OF ARUNAGIRINATHA

S.R.S. AYYAR



Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan

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S.R.S. Ayyar

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Dedicated
To
my Parents

FOREWORD

Lord Muruga is the favourite deity of the Tamils. He is known by many names. Muruga means beauty. He is supposed to be the embodiment of beauty. He is also supposed to be the Commander-in-Chief of the army of Devas. He had established six military camps *(Aarupadai Veedu)* covering the entire Tamilnadu for the purpose of fighting and eliminating the evil forces. There are millions of devotees of Lord Muruga and as to be expected there were many poetic compositions by his devotees. The most important of them is Arunagiri's Thiruppugazh. S.R.S. Ayyar has come forward with an analytical study of this beautiful musical composition under the title, "The Grandeur of Thiruppugazh". I hope this work will bring to the notice of other linguistic groups the beauty of Thiruppugazh and the manifold divine qualities of Lord Muruga.

C. SUBRAMANIAM

Madras
December 23, 1995

PREFACE

Thiruppugazh, the collection of divine, mellifluous Tamil musical praises on Lord Muruga, the handsome and powerful Offspring of Lord Siva, by Saint Arunagirinatha occupies a conspicuous and distinct place among the several devotional outpourings on the Lord. These hallowed hymns sprang forth from the saint's tongue as ordained by the Lord Himself. Truly Muruga chose the saint as His messenger for the spread of peace, love and kindness among the masses. And the soul-stirring *Thiruppugazh* songs served exceedingly well in fulfilment of this noble task.

Over the years many illustrious scholars have laboured hard in propagating *Thiruppugazh* and other masterly poetical creations of Arunagirinatha, which for some reason or the other, had not come before the public eye for long. It is believed that several hymns could not be traced despite persistent efforts and these priceless gems seem to have been permanently lost. The notable personalities who have put in strenuous efforts to bring *Thiruppugazh* into limelight are the revered Vallimalai Satchidananda Swamigal, Thiruppugazh Swamy Iyer, Thirumuruga Kripānanda Variar, 'Thiruppugazh Mani' T.M. Krishnaswamy Iyer, Vagheesa Kalanidhi Ki Vaa Jagannathan and Shri V.T. Subramania Pillai. *'Thanigaimani'* Dr. V.C. Sengalvaraya Pillai, son of Shri Subramania Pillai did a yeoman service in this field and credit for creating twelve Holy Orders (*Thirumurai*) for Muruga, comprising *Thiruppugazh* and other devotional offerings, and writing well-researched commentaries thereto in Tamil, goes to Dr. Sengalvaraya Pillai. The elaborate and the commendable commentaries contained in four volumes brought out by The South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society, Tinnevelly Ltd. served as a valuable reference material to the author who owes a great deal of gratitude to the publishers of these volumes.

Thiruppugazh Anbargal is a large conglomeration of *Thiruppugazh* lovers spread over India and overseas. This organisation was founded more than three decades ago by Guruji Shri A.S. Raghavan of Delhi. This organisation has been engaged in conduct of classes at various centres for teaching *Thiruppugazh* songs which are set to melodious ragas by the Founder, group singing of hymns, training of teachers, release of *Thiruppugazh*-related

publications and convening of seminars and symposia on Arunagirinatha's life and works. It is noteworthy that *'anbargal'* who have learnt *Thiruppugazh* train others in far away cities like New York, Washington, Connecticut, Chicago and New Jersey in USA, Toronto (Canada) Penang (Malaysia) and Jakarta (Indonesia) and also arrange periodical assemblies; their experience has been highly rewarding. The author takes pride in his being a small link in this mighty chain of *Thiruppugazh* lovers. The author acknowledges the guidance and advice he received from Guruji Shri Raghavan while undertaking this project.

Many publications and audio-cassettes were made use of while drafting the various chapters, which provided valuable inputs for this work.. It is difficult to name all of them here. The author is indebted to these famed writers and noted speakers.

The book is structured in a fashion which reflects the unbiased outlook of Saint Arunagirinatha. While apparently Arunagirinatha professed *Kaumara* cult, owing complete allegiance to Lord Muruga and His worship, he was not averse to other cults and their followers; in fact he identified himself wholly as a staunch devotee of other deities like Ganapathi, Siva, Shakti and Vishnu as revealed by his respectful veneration towards them and appropriate epical anecdotes relating to them.

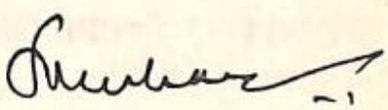
Chapter 1 seeks to provide a brief backdrop to the subject matter and gives some of the interesting facets connected with the 'advent' of Muruga into this planet. The succeeding two chapters contain biographical sketches of the life of Arunagirinatha based on traditional accounts and later studies carried out by learned scholars and researchers. Chapter 4 contains a detailed analysis of the structure and contents of *Thiruppugazh* songs viewed from different angles, which collectively bring out the supreme grandeur of these verses.

The saint's balanced approach towards *Gaanaapathya, Saivism, Shaaktam, Vaishnavism, Sowra* and finally *Kaumara*, as revealed in his supplications as also the exemplary manner in which he links other deities with his favourite Lord, Muruga is discussed in Chapters 5 to 10. The author's concluding observations are contained in Chapter 11. Translations of select *Thiruppugazh* songs and Glossary of *Thiruppugazh* songs referred to in this book are given in Appendix I and II respectively.

The author would like to strike a note of caution here. Appreciation of the beauty and substance of any poetry in its original form and that in a translated version would not yield satisfaction of the same degree. This is particularly so when verses like *Thiruppugazh* in chaste Tamil which are noted for their exceedingly rich poetical content, rhyme and phraseology are translated into English. While the author has strived to retain the flavour of the original verses while translating them into English, the readers are requested to keep this limitation in mind while going through the English translations of *Thiruppugazh* and other verses contained in the book.

The author expresses his deep sense of gratitude to Shri C. Subramaniam, former Governor of Maharashtra, who has written Foreword to this book. The author is grateful to Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan which agreed to publish his study on *Thiruppugazh* under its banner. He is particularly indebted to Shri. S. Ramakrishnan, Executive Secretary of the Bhavan who rendered assistance at every stage. The author's sincere thanks are due to Shri M.V. Arunachalam, Chairman of Bhavan's Madras Centre, who evinced keen interest in this literary venture and extended valuable support. Many well-wishers made useful comments and suggestions on reading the text and the author is thankful to all of them.

The author is conscious of the fact that the book is not an exhaustive treatise on *Thiruppugazh* which is weighty and all-pervasive. He would feel gratified if his modest endeavours to underscore the greatness of *Thiruppugazh* through this book succeed in kindling interest in the minds of those who aspire to experience the divine bliss arising out of the magnificent creations of the immortal bard, but who have had no occasion to know in somewhat greater details the origin of these songs, their structure and the message they seek to convey.



S.R.S. Ayyar

Madras

December 4, 1995

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CHAPTER 1

MURUGA - THE EVER-MERCIFUL LORD

"The fiery Mass, That stood as Brahman
That hath no beginning
Assuming a form from formless,
From several unto One,
Thus rose a **Thirumuruga**
With six merciful faces and twelve arms,
For the Universe to get rescued." [1]

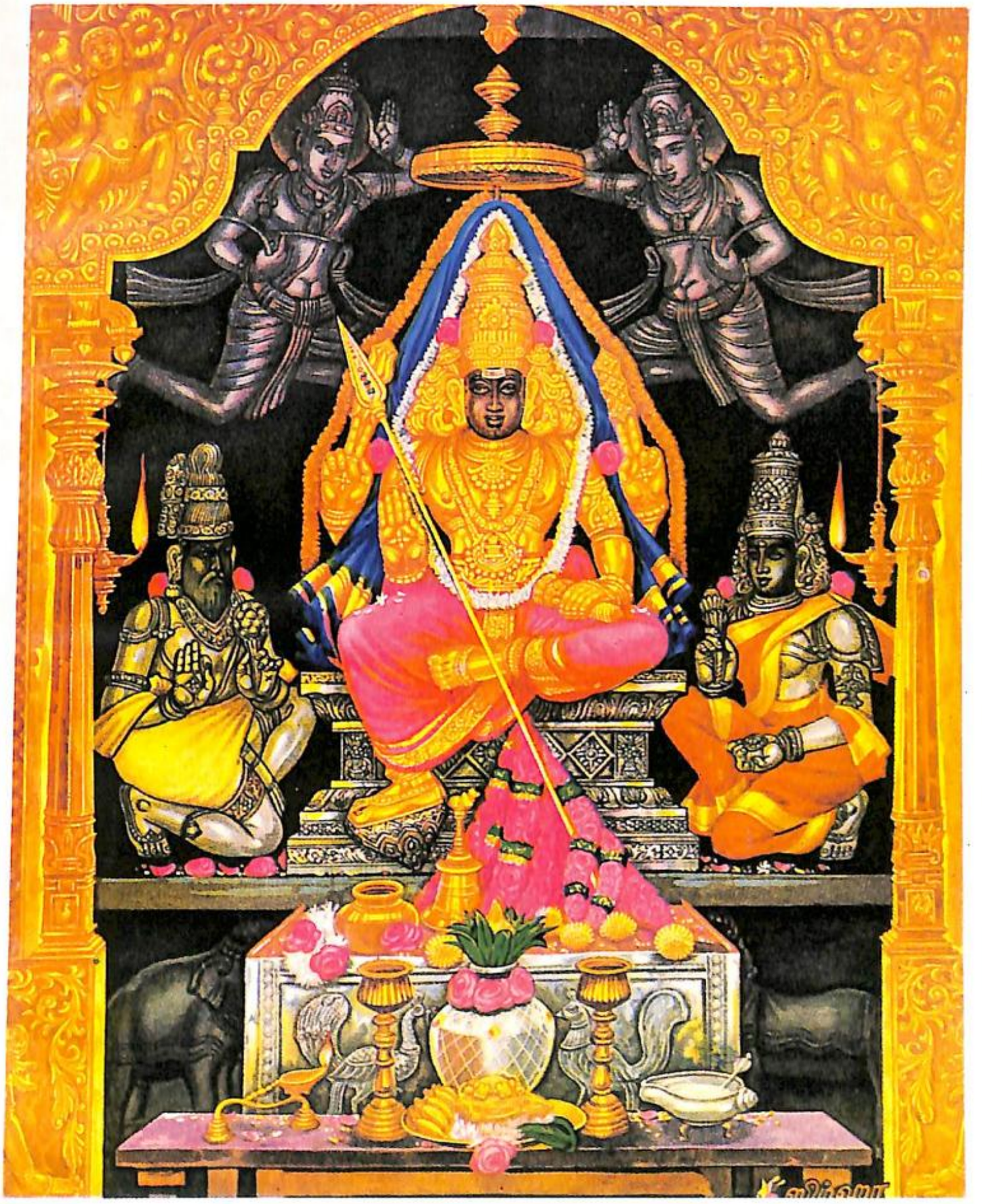
- Skanda Puranam.
(Kacchiyappa Sivaachariar)

In the Holy Pantheon of Hindu gods and goddesses, *Muruga*[2], has been given a pride of place. This is particularly discernible in the southern parts of India and some countries in the Far East, where Tamil-speaking people form a significant segment of the population. Lord Muruga is considered essentially as 'Tamil God' (*Thamizh Kadavul*). He is the repository of *Jnana* (Knowledge) and the very fountain-head of the three branches of Tamil literature - Prose (*Iyal*), Verse (*Isai*) and Theatre (*Natakam*). Great sages like *Agasthya* had worshipped Him and secured His grace. The dwarfish Agasthya, according to legends, had gone to *Podhiyamalai* in South and maintained the earth's equilibrium, at Lord Siva's command. The occasion was Siva's marriage with Parvathi when large multitudes of sages and devotees flocked to *Kailas*, causing sinkage of the earth's north side (Himalayas) and upturn of the southern portion[3]. *Nakkeerar, Poyya Mozhi, Owaiyaar, Kachiyappa Sivachariar, Kumara Gurupara* and *Arunagirinatha* are the other names instantly coming to one's mind; they were all close to Muruga's heart and who composed priceless and soul-stirring devotional gems in Tamil.

Muruga's glory and pre-eminence arise due to three reasons - He 'arrived' in this planet as the Son of *Lord Siva,*

as the younger Brother of *Lord Ganesa* and as the Nephew of Lord *Narayana*. He is venerated as *Kaliyuga Varada*[4], the God who blesses and protects those who ardently seek His grace. Kowsalya, Lord Rama's mother invoked the blessings of *'Skandha'*, when Rama took leave of her prior to his departure to forest as per King Dasaratha's wish.[5] And in Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna declares that among all commanders, He is *'Skandha'*.[6] Muruga contains in Himself the three divine eternal functions - creation *(Srishti)*, protection *(Sthithi)* and destruction *(Samhara)* as evidenced by the three first letters in His name: MU - *Mukundan* (Vishnu), RU - *Rudran* (Siva) and KA - *Kamalan* (Brahma). The three integral elements of Muruga's personality are Spear (*Vel*) in His hand, Peacock, His mount and Cock, which adorns His banner. *Vel* signifies *Jnanasakti* : this was given to Muruga by His Divine Mother, Parvathi wishing Him victory over *asuras* (demons) led by the tyrannous Soorapadma. The glittering spear of Muruga is venerated by devotees as *'Shakthi Vel'* or *'Veera Vel'* signifying its extra-ordinary power and strength. Cock and Peacock represent *'Nadham'* and *'Bindhu'*. The Peacock displays the divine shape of *'Omkara'* when it spreads its magnificent plumes into a full-blown circular form, while the Cock proclaims loudly the Pranava sound *'OM'*. Muruga shines as the very essence of *Vedas* and *mantras*[7].

Murugu in Tamil denotes divineness, handsomeness, youthfulness, happiness, fragrance and sweetness. The Lord is the very manifestation of handsomeness, robust youthfulness, masculinity, fragrance and unmatched valour and the abode of happiness. One would be endowed with everlasting youthfulness only when he or she is not getting old. Human beings take birth in this earth, pass through different stages such as childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age and ultimately meet with the inevitable death. They are again born in this world not necessarily in the same form as they were in their previous births[8]. This process goes on endlessly[9]. Muruga, on the other hand, has neither a beginning nor an end; He is not born nor dead[10]. Age does not wither Him away. This explains His evergreen youthfulness. The Sun is not visible to us temporarily at nights; for this reason one cannot conclude



Tirupparankunram

that Sun has ceased to exist, for when darkness engulfs a part of the globe, the Sun is shining bright somewhere else. We come to know of its existence when it rises again in the morning. Muruga's 'appearance' in this planet is analogous to this eternal phenomenon[11].

The epic *Skanda Purana*[12], one of the eighteen *Puranas* created by *Veda Vyasa*, vividly narrates the circumstances which led to the divine 'appearance' of Muruga, His glory and heroic achievements. He 'rose' to protect gods who were subjected to extreme tormentation and cruelty by demon Soorapadma. They all appealed collectively to Lord Siva to come to their rescue. Moved at their plight, Siva willed to bring forth a powerful divine personality, an element of Himself , but yet distinct from Him, Who would have unparalleled bravery, and Who alone would be able to slay Soorapadma and his clan. The extremely powerful spark which emanated from His third eye was carried by the Fire God (*Agni*) and was deposited in *Saravana* Lake; there arose six cute tiny tots who were looked after by six *Kirthiga* maidens and the Six Forms later united to become a Single Six Faced Child with resplendent beauty. Added to Siva's five faces, *Sadhyojata, Vamadeva, Aghora, Tatpurusha* and *Ishana* was *Adhomukha*; thus He became *"Shanmukha"*. He is known as *Saravanabhava* as He emerged out of *Saravana* lake, and *Karthikeya*, since six *kirthiga* maidens took the six babies in their arms and showered their affection on them.

Brahma, the Creator, happened to slight the young Muruga during one of his visits to Kailasa. Muruga wished to teach a lesson to the Creator for his act of imprudence. He asked the Four-faced Creator the meaning of *Pranava*. When he could not explain satisfactorily, Muruga taunted Brahma and not content with that imprisoned him too. He concluded that Brahma was not fit to perform the assigned job. He then assumed the role of the Creator! Muruga freed Brahma from prison when Siva, Vishnu and Indra prayed at His lotus Feet and requested for the release of the Creator[13].

Muruga turned a *guru* or teacher when He explained the essence of *Pranava* to His Father who received the *upadesa* in

all humility as a disciple. He thus came to be known as *Swaminatha*[14].

Another interesting anecdote links Muruga's taking a full round of the Universe, mounted on His mighty peacock. The legend has it that Sage Narada once visited Kailasa, the abode of Siva and presented Him with a divine pomegranate fruit. As is usual the case with fathers, Siva wanted to give it to His children Ganesa and Muruga, rather than consuming it Himself. In this process, He hatched a plot as a prelude to an eventful drama. He would not allow the fruit to be shared by two Brothers. Instead, He announced that the fruit would be given to either of the two, who returned first after taking a round of the Universe. No sooner Siva said this, than young Muruga started off riding on the back of His Peacock. His elder Brother Ganesa acted in a different manner. To Him, His eternal Parents, Siva and Parvathi represented the world and circumambulating them would be equivalent to the coming around the world. With this well-reasoned thought fixed in His mind, He took a round of His Parents and instantly annexed the prized fruit. Muruga, on return from His whirlwind trip around the Universe, learnt that His elder Brother had won the competition. A disappointed Muruga left Kailasa and proceeded straight to *Pazhani* Hill in South India. The name *Pazhani* is in fact the derivative of *Pazham Nee* {(Thou art fruit - Fruit of *Jnana* (knowledge)} as addressed by His Parents who rushed to *Pazhani* to soothe the enraged Muruga.

Soorapadma, who had the temerity to confront Muruga, despite being forewarned, became prey to His powerful *Vel* (spear) after a stiff fight. Muruga acted as a Supreme Commander (*Deva Senapati)* and freed gods from their captivity. The ever-compassionate Lord converted the two portions of His slain enemy as an integral part of Himself - one becoming Peacock, His mount and the other, Cock, adorning His banner.

Muruga's Consorts are *Valli* and *Devayanai*. They represent *Ichha Sakthi* and *Kriya Sakthi*. They were in reality Sundaravalli and Amudhavalli who were born out of tears of joy of *Narayana*, when He incarnated as *Trivikrama*. Both the celes-

tial damsels did intense penance with the object of attaining the exalted status as Muruga's Consorts. Pleased with their prayers, Muruga appeared before them and ordained that Amudhavalli would be born in *Devaloka* as Devendra's daughter[15], while Sundaravalli would take birth in the earth, in the hunter tribe. The Lord promised to marry both Valli and Devayanai. The marriage of Muruga and Devayanai took place at *Thirupparamkundram* attendant with full vedic rites. Devayanai was in fact gifted to Muruga by Devendra in grateful acknowledgment of heroism and valour displayed by Muruga as the Supreme Commander of god's forces and his triumph over the deadly demon race[16]. *Deva Senapati* thus became *Devasena Pati.*

Muruga's wedding with Valli is replete with many interesting interludes. Muruga chose to engage in a few frolics before accepting Valli as His Consort. King *Nambeesa* of *Chithoor,* the Head of hunter tribe, had seven sons and he was aspiring to have a daughter. He was deeply devoted to Muruga. The Sage *Sivamuni,* who was doing *tapasya* in the forest chanced to see a female deer and his mere sight resulted in the animal becoming pregnant[17]. The animal delivered a beautiful baby girl and left the place. King Nambeesa, who had gone to the forest with his sons for hunting saw the bewitching babe and brought it home and began to foster the child as his own daughter. As the girl was found among "Valli" vines[18], she was named Valli. Valli ceaselessly nurtured the thought of Muruga even from her tender age and was determined to have Him as her Husband and none else. When she became of marriageable age, Nambeesa, in tune with the hunter tribe custom, sent her to *'Thinaippunam'* (fields growing *Thinai* grains). She was to keep vigil perched on a high rise rostrum and protect the crops from wandering birds till the crops were harvested. It was at this time Valli got *Guru Dheeksha* from Sage Narada who met her and said to her that Muruga would be the ideal match for her. The words of the sage pleased Valli highly. She was in fact having this very thought for years! Narada then went to *Thirutthani,* where the Lord was in a composed mood after the fierce battle with Soorapadma. The sage reminded Muruga about His

assurance to marry the two maidens and told that one girl remaining to be wed, Valli, was yearning intensely and persistently for Him.

Muruga's *leela*s began now[19]. He first appeared as a hunter and did not find any positive response from Valli to His clever approaches. He turned into a giant *"Vengai"* tree when Valli's father suddenly appeared on the scene. Thereafter, He took the form of a trembling old man and ate millet flour-honey mixture offered by Valli feigning that He was feeling very hungry. He proposed to wed her, much to the chagrin of Valli. Finally, Muruga invoked the blessings of His Elder Brother, Ganesa for success of his mission. On the fervent appeal of His younger Brother, Ganesa appeared as a wild elephant in the forest and began to chase Valli. Terrified with the mighty pachyderm's menacing advance, Valli ran for protection and came straight into the hands of Muruga[20].

Now that Valli had *Sparsha Dheeksha* (initiation by touch), Muruga appeared with dazzling six faces and twelve arms, mounted on peacock before Valli and reminded her of her past and His vow to marry her on the Earth. Nambeesa and his tribesmen's attempts to resist Muruga Who had taken away Valli could not last long. On Muruga revealing His identity, Nambeesa regretted over his fólly in confronting the Lord and gave his daughter in marriage to Muruga according to custom of hunter tribe.

The learned scholar late Shri Keeran during the course of his discourses has admirably explained the esoteric meaning of Muruga's reprimanding Brahma, His slaying Soorapadma and the Lord's marrying Valli and Devayanai. The author thought it appropriate to quote these here[21] :

"The action of Muruga in knocking at the head of Brahma and imprisoning him signifies that one should not try to belittle God with pride of knowledge; if one prostrates at His feet with love, God Himself will reach him."

"It is also not correct to say that Muruga slew Soorapadma. The Lord did not destroy him. Raavana, Mahaabali, Kamsa and the like perished, but Soorapadma did not perish. He turned into Peacock and Cock. He stood as a tree of egoism with two branches that were 'I' and 'Mine'. Skandha

pierced it into two portions with His Spear (*Vel*) and converted them into Peacock and Cock. He did not throw him away, but retained with Himself. Human mind resembles the tree that is Soorapadma. If its branches, 'I' and 'Mine' are destroyed with Spear of Knowledge *(Jnana)*, one can remain for ever with the Lord as the Cock and Peacock do."

"Similarly the Lord's twin weddings contain in themselves an exalted meaning. They are not ordinary marriages. The Lord is not only the Form of Siva, but of Shakti too. If Spear is *Jnanashakti*, Indra's daughter (Devayanai) is *Kriya Shakti* and *Icchashakti* which causes functioning of the latter, is in the form of Valli. Further, man's needs are of two kinds. One is the basic need. The other one arises out of the quest for comforts and luxuries. The most backward in the society are like hunters. They are not capable of fulfilling their basic requirements. Valli represents this mass of people. She was hunter's daughter, who longed to reach the Lord. On the other side, there are people like Indra; they belong to the upper strata of society, they lack nothing. Devayanai represents such people; she had also done penance to reach the Lord. The Lord contained both the Women in Himself. With consistent love, *Jeevaatma*, regardless of body it is in, merges into *Paramaatma*. Before God, there is no High and Low. He is bound only by love."

Muruga's abodes are countless. He resides mostly at hill tops[22]. Among his holy abodes, six are prominent and these are known as *Aäru Padaiveedugal*. A vivid portrayal of these six sacred places is found in the opera *Thirumurugatruppadai*, composed by Nakkeerar, the famed poet.

There is a story behind Nakkeerar's creation of *Thirumurugatruppadai*.

Nakkeerar once challenged Lord Siva over a Tamil verse, composed by the latter Himself to help an indigent poet, which sought to convey the sense that women's hair have a natural fragrance. Nakkeerar held firmly to his ground that this was not true and declared that even the celestial women including Goddess Parvathi did not possess this characteristic. This he did despite his realising that the person whom he was opposing was none other than Lord Siva. Nakkeerar's

haughtiness invited the wrath of Siva who cursed him that he be afflicted with leprosy. When he atoned for his impropriety and fell at the Feet of Siva, He beckoned him to visit Kailasa for his deliverance.

Nakkeerar started his northward journey towards Kailasa and reached the Himalayas. When he was resting at a lake side, by quirk of fate, he was captured and put into a cave by a horse-faced female *bhootha* [23], where he found himself to be the thousandth person. The *bhootha* was to devour all the thousand inmates. Not getting worried about his safety, Nakkeerar concerned at the plight of his fellow captives, called out Muruga for help and the divine opera *Thirumurugatruppadai* sprang forth from his tongue. It is said that Muruga, listening to His devotee's outpouring, rushed to the spot and rescued him from the clutches of the *bhootha*. Nakkeerar conveyed his intention of going to Kailasa in fulfillment of his vow and requested Muruga to show the way to Kailasa. Muruga reminded him that Kalahasti, the *Dakshina Kailasa* equalled North Kailasa and Nakkeerar could worship Siva in Kalahasti itself to get freed from the curse. Muruga further said to Nakkeerar that if he took a dip in the lake, he would see Kailasa and disappeared. Nakkeerar did so, and lo! he rose from the banks of Swarnamukhi (*Ponmugari)* river in Kalahasti, fully cured of his deadly affliction! The incident[24] proclaims the greatness of *Thirumurugatruppadai* and Muruga's extreme fondness to this devotional composition.

Coming to the six holy abodes of Muruga, these are : *Thirupparamkundram, Thiruchendoor, Thiruvavinankudi* (*Pazhani*), *Thiruverakam, Kundruthoraädal* (*Thirutthani* and several other hills) and *Pazhamuthircholai.* Muruga blesses His devotees who visit shrines at these places.

Thirupparamkundram is at a distance of eight kilometres from Madurai in South India. This holy place is associated with the divine marriage of Muruga with Devayanai. *Thiru Jnana Sambhandhar* and *Sundaramoorthi Swamigal,* two of the *Saiva Samaya* quartet had visited *Thirupparamkundram.* There is a sacred tank known as *Saravana Poygai* in the temple precincts. It is nice to see fish emerging from the tank and jumping to accept the puffed rice (*Pori*) offered to them!

The *Subramania* shrine at *Thiruchendoor* is situated by the side of sea. From Tirunelveli in the South India, one has to travel a distance of about 60 km to reach this beautiful sea resort. Muruga annihilated the demon forces led by Soorapadma at *Thiruchendoor*. The Lord's heroic fight with Soora is enacted with religious fervour during the annual *Skandha Shashti* festival here, which draws a large number of devotees. Though the temple is in close proximity to sea, if one goes to deep interior of the *sanctum sanctorum*, he would be surprised to find a hillock there! Is He not the one Who ever loves to reside at hill tops? We will not find the usual *'Vel'* in deity's hand at this temple, since He is depicted as one offering *puja* to Siva to get recompense from the sin of killing numerous lives. Jagadguru Adi Sankara had visited the *Thiruchendoor* temple and offered prayers. The famous hymn, *Sri Subramanya Bhujangam* was composed at this temple. The Sage *Kumara Gurupara* composed *Kandhar Kali Venpa* at this hallowed spot[25].

Pazhani is the third *Padai veedu*. The other names of Pazhani are *Sivagiri* and *Sivamalai*. *Pazhani* is at a distance of about 60 km from Dindigul in South India. While *Sri Dhandayudhapani* blesses devotees from the hill top, there is a Muruga temple down the hill, which is called *Thiruvavinankudi*. The association of *Pazhani* with Muruga's round the world trip has been mentioned earlier. Muruga presented *Japamalai* (Rosary) to *Arunagirinatha* in *Thiruvavinankudi*[26]. It is believed that Sage Agasthya did penance at *Thiruvavinankudi* and learnt the five grammars of Tamil language under Lord Muruga.

Thiruverakam comes next. Popularly known as *Swamimalai*, this is located at a distance of 8 km from Kumbakonam in South India on the northern banks of the river Cauvery. The Lord here presents Himself as *Gurunatha* Who preached *pranava* to His Father, Siva (*"Swami"*) and thus became *Swaminatha*. Arunagirinatha got divine "lotus Feet" *darshan* of Muruga here. It is believed that the sixty steps of the temple leading to the *sanctum sanctorum* represent the sixty Tamil months.

Kundruthoraädal is a generic term which denotes many-a-hill having holy shrines of Muruga[27]. *Thirutthani* is prominent among them. Situated at a distance of 13 km from Arakkonam, near Madras, *Thirutthani* abounds in its scenic beauty. Muruga, in *Thirutthani*, it is said, is in a soothing and relaxed mood. His ire over Soora and his kinsmen, whom He vanquished in battle, had cooled down. His two divine Consorts, Valli and Devayanai are with Him at this temple. *Thirutthani* has a unique distinction since it is the most favourite hill of Muruga among the several hills of the world. The Lord Himself has told so to Valli, as we observe from Skandha Puranam (*Valliammai Thirumanam*). There is a school of thought which professes that Muruga preached the essence of *Pranava* to His Father Siva in *Thirutthani*, which is also known as *Santhadri* and *Paripoornachalam*. Every year, on December 31, a large number of devotees congregate at *Thirutthani*. They sing *Thiruppugazh* while climbing the steps leading to the temple at the hill top and worship the Lord *Thanigesa* (Muruga).

Pazhamuthircholai comes last in the series of six holy places. This is at a distance of about 20 km from Madurai in South India. The temple of Muruga, Who is flanked by Valli and Devayanai, is located amidst quiet and beautiful landscape. At the top of the hill, is *Noopura Ganga*, a perennial waterfall with a temple dedicated to *Raakkayi Amman*. *Azhagar Koil*, the temple of *Sri Narayana*, is also near Pazhamuthircholai.

In this *Kali Yuga*, chanting of Muruga's Name acts as a panacea to all sufferings.[28] Those who display love to one and all, devoid of hatred, jealousy, passion, anger and avarice and are steadfast in devotion to Muruga, invariably get mental tranquillity and everlasting bliss. They do not even fear death[29]. The pious saints who lived amidst us and who got Muruga's infinite grace had in fact been in direct communion with Muruga and their experiences with the ever-merciful Lord have found expression in their devotional outpourings. They have attained immortality and serve as a medium for the worldly-minded who are after ephemeral pleasures to be-

come seekers of perpetual spiritual bliss. Saint Arunagirinatha was such an inspired and great soul.

Footnotes

1. *"Aruvamum Uruvamaagi Anaadhiyai Palavaai Onraai*
   Brahmamai Ninra Jothip pizhambadhor Meniyaagi
   Karunai Koor Mugangal Aarum Karamadhu
   Pannirandum Konde
   Oru Thiru Murugan Vandhu Aangu Vudhitthanan Vulagamuyya."
2. Also known as *Subramanya, Karthikeya, Visakha, Shanmukha, Kumara, Skandha, Guha* and *Saravanabhava.*
3. Arunagirinatha recalls this happening in his Thiruppugazh hymn *"Ayilappu"*, sung at Kancheepuram.
4. *"Skandhasya Keerthimathulaäm Kalikalmasha Naäsineem"* (Skandha's sacred story removes all sins and bestows fame and name). - *Skandhapurana.*
5. *Valmiki Ramayana - Ayodhya Kaanda* - Sarga 25, Stanzas 11 and 12.
6. *Bhagavad Gita*- Chapter 10 (*Vibhuti Vistara Yoga*) - Stanza 24.
7. A vedic intonation on Muruga ends thus:
   "Subramanyoham, Subramanyoham, Subramanyoham."
   The repetition of Muruga's name thrice implies the reigning supremacy of the Lord.
8. Arunagirinatha says in one of his Chidambaram Thiruppugazh hymns :
   ('Yezhu kadal manalai')
   " Number of distressful life forms I have assumed over several births
   would exceed the sands of seven seas."
9. *" Births and deaths by turn (do I face),*
   In mother's womb lie I again and again,
   Ocean of life this, impassable and boundless is,
   Oh Murari ! have mercy and protect me".
   - Adi Sankara in *'Bhaja Govindam'*
10. Stanza 12 of *Kandhar Anubhoothi* declares this truth on unequivocal terms.
11. Note the title of Kalidasa's masterly literary piece on Muruga. He calls it *"Kumara Sambhavam"* and not *"Kumara Jananam"*.
12. The credit for translating this *magnum opus* into Tamil, and that at the command of Muruga, goes to *Kachiyappa Sivachariar*, who lived in Kancheepuram and was the priest in the temple of *Kumarakkottam*. It is believed that his sacred book has the stamp of approval of the Lord.
13. *"Piqu'd at his ignorance (of substance of Pranava)*
    Once did Thou dishevel the tuft of the Four-faced (Brahma)
    In the wink of an eye;
    The Threesome beseeching Thee at Thy Twin feet

Did Thou set free (Brahma) from captivity..."
- Thiruezhukkootrirukkai (Arunagirinatha)

14. *"Gurunatha, Who preached Upadesa mantra into the two ears of Siva to His heart's content ... " (Sivanaar Manam Kulira).*
- Thiruvavinankudi Thiruppugazh.

15. A different version the author happened to hear is that she was the daughter of *Upendra,* younger brother of Devendra. However, the *Ashtothara Satha Namavali* dedicated to Devayanai refers to her among other names, as *Vajri Sutha* (daughter of *Vajrapani, (Devendra),* which contradicts this version. That Devayanai was the daughter of Devendra is confirmed by Arunagirinatha, when he refers to Devayanai as *"Vajrapanik - kumari* in his *Bhootha Vethala Vaguppu.* (Vajrapani - Indra) and to Muruga's wedding "Indra's daughter" in Tiruchendoor Thiruppugazh *"Padar Buviyin....'*

16. *Asurar Kulanthaka* (*Yama* to the Demon Race), so eulogises *Arunagirinatha* in one of his compositions.

17. Sage Sivamuni and the deer were none other than Lord Vishnu and Sri Lakshmi; Sage *Kanva* had cursed them to take these births.

18. A thick, sweet and edible tuberous root.

19. It is seen from a Thiruppugazh song *"Thalai Mayir Kokkukku.....".* (Pazhamuthircholai) that Muruga proceeded to wed Valli without the knowledge of Devayanai.

20. *" Lord who came as elephant and blessed young Muruga to marry that hunter girl (Valli) that very moment",* ..... runs a *Thiruppugazh* song in praise of *Vinayaka. (Kaithala Niraikani..)*

21. *Source :* "Silver Jubilee Souvenir" - ' Thiruppugazh Anbargal', (Karnataka Region) September 1994 (pps. 96-101) (Free translation into English from Tamil).

22. Devotees call Muruga as *Kundruthor aädum Kumaran* - Kumara who resides on every Hill.

23. Source : Arunagirinatha's *"Bhootha Vethala Vaguppu."*

24. This narration is based on *Thirukkalatthi Puranam; Parangiri Puranam* gives a different version.

25. Kumara Gurupara, who was a native of Sree Kailasam Division of Sree Vaikuntam in Tirunelveli district in South India, was mute till he was five years old when his parents prayed at the lotus Feet of Lord of *Chenthil* (Muruga), placing the child at His holy doorstep. Responding to their devotion, Muruga not only made Kumara Gurupara to speak, but also made him a great orator and poet, well-versed in Sanskrit and Tamil.

26. *" Sadgurunatha, who gave (me a) Japamalai* (Rosary)" *Apagara Nindhai....*
- Thiruvavinankudi Thiruppugazh.

27. Among the numerous hill temples of Muruga, mention may be made of Thirumalai (Sri Sailam), Thiruvengadam (Tirupathi), Vallimalai, Ratnagiri, Viraalimalai, Tiruchirapalli, Thiruchengodu, Kundrakkudi and Kathirkaamam (Sri Lanka); Arunagirinatha has sung Thiruppugazh

hymns in all these shrines. Temples of Muruga have also been built in several centres both in India and abroad in later years. There is a Kaarthikeya (Muruga) temple atop *Parvati Hills* at Pune (Maharashtra) and one located at *Vetrimalai* at Port Blair (Andaman Islands). In a Thiruppugazh hymn, captioned *'Kheshtrakkovai', (Kumbakonamodu)* Arunagirinatha concludes by addressing Muruga, as the One *'Who has temples spread over the entire world"*. A statement which is true for all times to come!

28. Muruga Himself is said to have told Narada : "Those who have sought refuge in Me have no fear, they won't be left with any wants; those who are devoted to me have no enemies, they have no diseases...."

29. Arunagirinatha in the concluding verse of his *Kandar Alankaram* says :

" Never shall I fear Yama, who follows (me)
Holding Soola and whipping his rope
Hath I the true help of Vel
And the holy Hands of the Six-faced God,
The Offspring of the Lord Who consumed the venom
That gushed out of the ocean."

CHAPTER 2

SAINT ARUNAGIRINATHA - A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

"Oh, Vela! (Muruga) wouldst other trifling verses
Enter thence into Thine ears lovingly
In the same way as the hymns (Thiruppugazh)
That Arunagirinatha sings in Thy praise
Out of compassion (towards the earthlings)
In this vast Universe?".[1]

- A Tamil laudatory verse of early times.

If one recounts the names of great men and saints who were singularly fortunate in winning the limitless grace of Lord Muruga, the sacred name of Arunagirinatha will instantly come to one's mind. Here was a rare instance when the merciful Lord, by His own volition, chose Arunagirinatha as one of His most favourite devotees and made him His messenger for propagating universal love and brotherhood through the medium of divinely, soul-stirring Tamil hymns in His praise, known as *Thiruppugazh*. And Muruga did this under a most extraordinary situation as we shall see later.

Arunagirinatha's divine verses are immortal since they bear the divine stamp of Muruga. The great versifier extolled the glory of the Lord residing in His six chief abodes (*Aäru Padaiveedugal*) referred to in previous chapter and several other venerated spots, in more than 16,000 *Thiruppugazh* songs; but to its hard luck, mankind could benefit only with 1325 of these gems. The other works of the saint are *Kandhar Anubhoothi, Kandhar Alankaram, Kandhar Andhadhi, Vël-Mayil-Cheval Virutham* and twenty-five compositions which come under what is known as *Thiruvaguppu*[2] and *Thiruezhukkootrirukkai.*

Thiruppugazh and other heavenly works of Arunagirinatha are highly efficacious in uplifting human

beings who are enveloped in the veil of illusion and who are subjected to multifarious hardships and diseases. Those who recite these devotional praises with a pure heart and unflinching devotion to Muruga invariably get their hearts' desires fulfilled, prosper in their lives and gradually, but surely, get into an unexplainable blissful state which they alone can experience. The greatness of *Thiruppugazh* songs is that even if one is not given to singing thanks to the complexities associated with these songs, arising out of their unique word-structure and rhythmic pattern (*Chandham*), it would suffice if he or she simply recites them as a prose with full devotion. The desired results would still accrue.

Saint Arunagirinatha is glorified by a number of appellations - *Saarvabhowma Dindima Kavi, Ashtabhasha Parameswarar, Shad Dharsana Shanmukhar, Chandhappavala Peruman, Chithra Kavi, Chandhakkavi* - to name a few. *Vakkirkkaruna Giri* (Arunagiri for words) - so eulogised *Thayumanava*. Muruga offered *Upadesa* to three distinguished individuals, Arunagirinatha being one of them. The remaining two are Lord Siva, His Father and Agasthya, the great sage.

Saint Arunagirinatha took birth in this ancient land of ours in the fifteenth century. Researchers differ in their biographical account of the saint-poet. The author would like to present here the traditional and widely-believed account of Arunagirinatha's life. A few interesting insights into the life of the saint, provided by a few erudite researchers after a study of ancient texts and inscriptions, are given in the next chapter.

Thiruvannamalai or *Thiruvarumai* was the birth place of Arunagirinatha[3]. A great deal of sacredness is attached to Thiruvannamalai. This is one of the *Pancha Bhootha Sthalas* (Centres of Five Elements). Thiruvannamalai represents Fire (*Agni*)[4]. The Lord *Arunachaleswara* (Siva) is the Presiding Deity of Thiruvannamalai temple. The legend has it that both Brahma and Vishnu failed to spot the peak or the base of the colossal *Jyothi Swarupa* that was Siva[5]. The eminence of Thiruvannamalai is proved by yet another general belief. There are four *moksha saadhanas* (means for liberation). These are: to be born in *Thiruvaroor*[6], offering worship at *Chidambaram*, remembering *Thiruvannamalai* or breathing one's last at

Varanasi (*Kasi*). It is apparent that remembering *Thiruvannamalai* for getting salvation is the easiest of the four routes and is certainly under one's control.

Arunagirinatha was born in the Tamil month of *Aäni* (mid-June to mid-July) on a Full Moon Day, with *Moolam* as his birth star. His original name was *Sonadharar*[7]. It is believed that the saint-poet was the contemporary of King Prabhudadevaraya (1422 to 1466 AD) and adorned the King's *Darbar* as a Tamil poet. The saint refers to King Prabhudadevaraya in one of his *Thiruppugazh* songs[8].

The saint's early life, according to the widely-believed accounts, was not inspiring. He is said to have indulged excessively in worldly pleasures. It was a time when the grace of Muruga had not descended on him. Many of his compositions contain references to the degrading life he led before Muruga emancipated him[9]. With the passage of time, Arunagirinatha came to be afflicted with leprosy.[10] One day under most excruciating circumstances a sudden transformation took place in him[11]. The saint realised what a miserable life he had lived so far. He felt highly remorseful. This was a turning point in his life[12]. The sense of guilt overpowered his reasoning and the saint in utter despair decided to end his life. He ascended the lofty temple tower of *Thiruvannamalai* and leapt down with Lord Muruga's holy name in his lips.

Then the miracle happened ! Muruga was perhaps waiting for such a climax to occur in the life of the individual whom He had chosen for a special mission. It has often been seen that the God Almighty, before bestowing His grace on his devotee tests his loyalty and steadfastness of devotion and makes sure that he sincerely repents over his past misdeeds. Driven to an extreme situation, when a devotee becomes desperate and even attempts to put an end to his life, the Lord intervenes and resuscitates him. This was what happened to Arunagirinatha. Even as Arunagirinatha was about to hit the ground, Muruga had manifested Himself as *Gurunatha*, the Eternal Teacher at the foot of the tower. The Lord received the saint gently in His hands. Arunagirinatha stood awe-struck before the divine effulgent Form with six faces and twelve arms, which Muruga had assumed. The

Lord sneered at Arunagirinatha's plan to end his life. The benevolent Lord blessed Arunagirinatha and tendered the divine *Upadesa:* "Remain Quiet"[13]. The saint, on winning Muruga's grace, forgot the world and surroundings and did penance for twelve years.

Moved by Arunagirinatha's intense meditation, Muruga appeared before him in radiant splendour and ordained His disciple to sing His glory for the upliftment of the mankind. Having not been exposed to the skillful art of composing hymns, Arunagirinatha conveyed his helplessness to abide by the Lord's command. Muruga then gently wrote the Pranava ('*OM*') on the saint's tongue with his *Vel* (Spear) and even prompted him by giving the opening word "*Muthai*"[14] for his maiden musical offering. Lo! an unending stream of words in chaste Tamil with perfect rhythm began gushing forth from Arunagirinatha's blessed tongue, as though from open flood gates! The boundless grace of merciful Lord had already made its impact on Arunagirinatha.

Saint Arunagirinatha again immersed himself in meditational trance. When he emerged out of *Yoga Nidra,* he heard Muruga's *asareeri* (voice sans body) from space asking him to come to *Vayalur*[15]. The saint had a magnificent darshan of lord at *Vayalur.* There was another fond command of Muruga here. He beckoned the saint to *Viralimalai.* When Arunagirinatha had difficulties in finding out as to which direction he should go in the forests to reach Viralimalai, Muruga appeared as a hunter and showed him the way.

The saint visited a number of shrines, including the venerated six shrines (*Aäru Padaiveedugal*) and sang the glory of Muruga as ordained by Him. The divine hymns had become popular among the devotees spread over four corners of the country.

Two incidents in Arunagirinatha's life stand out in prominence, which proclaim the saint-poet's profound knowledge of Tamil, his unflinching devotion to Muruga and his limitless compassion for fellow-men.

When the sage was passing through *Saniyoor,* he came to know that a renowned Tamil Scholar and poet Villipputhooräar had the strange practice of inviting Tamil

poets for debating contests. He used to cut off the ears of poets who were invariably defeated by him in these challenges. Arunagirinatha accepted Villipputhooräar's challenge invoking Muruga's blessings. He had quick and apt replies to all the questions of his opponent. When his turn came, Arunagirinatha commenced to recite *Kandhar Andhadhi* and sought Villipputhooräar's commentary stanza by stanza. And Villipputhooräar did so until he came to the fifty-fourth stanza. Here he abruptly stopped, unable to offer any explanation. Villipputhooräar accepted defeat and as already agreed, offered his ears to be sliced off. But Arunagirinatha, the repository of compassion, did not wish to be associated with such a barbaric act. He said to Villipputhooräar not to inflict bodily injury to any one henceforth and to encourage young and talented scholars and poets. It is believed that at the instance of Arunagirinatha, Villipputhooräar composed *Villi Bharatham* to wash off his sins.

Another anecdote in Arunagirinatha's life relates to the encounter which the saint had with a *Kaali Upasaka*, Sambhandandaan who lived in *Thiruvannamalai*. The worshipper of Goddess Kaali (*Shakti*) did not belong to the *Saiva* cult. The King Prabhudadevaraya was friendly with both. Sambhandandaan vowed that he would make the Goddess appear before the King. Saint Arunagirinatha promised that the King would be enabled to have the *darshan* of Muruga. On Sambhandandaan's appeal, Shakti declined to give darshan, but assured Her devotee that She would prevent Muruga from appearing before Prabhudadevaraya.

On the appointed day, both Sambhandandaan and Arunagirinatha presented themselves at the King's Court. Sambhandandaan's prayers before the Goddess for Her appearance at that venue did not succeed as anticipated; but he was inwardly happy that She wouldn't release Muruga. Arunagirinatha praised the glory of Muruga by offering *Seer Padha Vaguppu* and *Kadaikanniyal Vaguppu*[16]. There was no response since the Goddess had made Muruga a child and kept Him on Her lap. Arunagirinatha then sang *Mayil Vaguppu* in worshipful praise of Muruga's holy mount, the Peacock. It had the desired effect. The Peacock on hearing the hymn

began dancing. Seeing the Peacock dancing, Muruga jumped off from His Mother's lap and rushed to Arunagirinatha riding on the mighty bird's back. King Prabhudadevaraya was blinded by the extremely powerful rays that accompanied the Lord's manifestation. Arunagirinatha is said to have cured the king of this malady with the Sacred Ash (*Vibhoothi*). The anecdote proclaims Arunagirinatha's hold over the *Ishta Devata*, Muruga, which arose solely out of his unflinching devotion and confidence that Lord would not disappoint him and simultaneously, Muruga's earnestness to come to the rescue of His *bhaktas* in times of need, wherever they are placed[17].

It is believed that Sambhandandaan, irked at the defeat he suffered on the hands of Arunagirinatha, set afloat a theory to the King that Arunagirinatha alone was capable of fetching the celestial *Karpaga (Parijatha)* flower. When the king requested Arunagirinatha for this precious gift, the saint who had the extraordinary ability to enter into and come out of the bodies[18]; left his mortal coils near the temple tower and entered into the dead body of a parrot lying nearby. The parrot whic0life with the entry of saint's soul in its body flew to the celestial world for fetching the rare flower. Sambhandandaan, waiting for such an opportunity, made arrangements for the burial of human body that no longer belonged to Arunagirinatha. It is said that the saint completed his mission successfully and presented the heavenly flower to the King Prabhudadevaraya and even revealed his real identity. Since his earlier human frame was then not in existence, Arunagirinatha remained in parrot form. It is believed that the highly potent *Kandhar Anubhoothi* was sung by the saint-composer when he was in this avian form.

After completing the sacred mission assigned to him by Muruga, Arunagirinatha attained the lotus Feet of Muruga, again on a Full Moon Day in the Tamil month of *Aäni* with *Moolam* as the star - just as he was born on this day. A few others say that Arunagirinatha ever remained as a parrot on the shoulder of *Thiruttani* Muruga. A visitor to Siva temple at *Thiruvannamalai* would find a replica of a parrot at the top of the temple tower from where the saint had leapt and also the *Sannidhi* (temple) of Muruga, who had then come as

saint's saviour, near the entrance to the Northern Tower[19]. In another shrine, in the temple complex, we find the image of Muruga on peacock back carved on one of the pillars and it is believed that the Lord had manifested out of this pillar when Arunagirinatha was having his encounter with Sambhandandaan. Is this not reminiscent of Lord Narasimha's thundering emergence from the pillar at the royal court of *Hiranyakasipu*, the demon, to confirm the statement of young Prahlada that Hari is present even at that pillar?

Footnotes

1. *Arunagirinathan Akhilathalatthunnai*
   Karunaiyinal Paadum Kavi Pol - Priyamura
   Verumor Punkavigal, Velone! Nin Cheviyil
   Erumo? Yenne Ini?.
2. The twenty-five hymns which are classified under *Thiruvaguppu* are : *Seerpaadha Vaguppu, Devendra Sangha Vaguppu, Vël Vaguppu, Thiru Velaikkaran Vaguppu, Perutha Vachana Vaguppu, Bhootha Vethala Vaguppu, Porugalatthalagai Vaguppu, Cherukkalatthalagai Vaguppu, Porkkalatthalagai Vaguppu, Thirujnana Vezha Vaguppu, Thirukkaiyil Vazhakka Vaguppu, Vedicchi Kaavalan Vaguppu, Sevakan Vaghuppu, Vël Vaangu Vaghuppu, Puya Vaguppu, Chithu Vaghuppu, Kadakkaniyal Vaguppu, Sivaloka Vaguppu, Mayil Vaguppu, Kolu Vaguppu, Veera Vaal Vaguppu, Sivagiri Vaguppu, Thiru Chendil Vaguppu, Thiruppazhani Vaguppu* and *Thirupparamgiri Vaguppu.*
3. " A *bhakta* of Arunai Nagar" - so says Arunagirinatha about himself in *"Vedicchikavalan Vaguppu."*
4. The other four centres are : *Kancheepuram* - Earth (*Prithvi*), *Thiruvanaikka* - Water (*Ap*), *Thirukkalatthi* - Air (*Väyu*) and *Chidambaram* - Ether (*Äkasa*).
5. " (*The Lord who was*) *Hidden to Hari* and *Ayan,*
   The Leader who directed His spark laughingly unto three worlds... "
   Ari Ayan aria ....- Vadugur Thiruppugazh.
6. " *Subservient I am to all those who were born in Thiruvaroor. "*
   - Thirutthonda Thogai (Sundara moorthy Swamigal).
7. It was Lord Muruga who in later life of the Saint addressed him as *Arunagirinatha.*
8. *"Athala Chedanaar Aada..."*
9. Some hold the view that such narrations by Arunagirinatha do not directly relate to him, but they point out the weaknesses and vices of average human beings.
10. The saint's own admission of this is found in Thiruppugazh hymn *"Enai adaindha..". (Thirutthani)*

11. A different version is that the harsh words of his elder sister inflicted a deep wound in Arunagiritha's mind, prompting him to take up ascetism.
12. Such turning points have occurred in the lives of other great men as well. A striking similarity is found in the life of Tulsidas. The saint-poet was given to mundane pleasures in his early life. He was deeply attached to his wife, Mamta Devi; so intense an attachment that he could not even bear temporary separation from her. Once, in a stormy midnight, Tulsidas wanted to meet Mamta Devi, who had gone to her mother's place. He had to cross the flooded Yamuna river to reach her village. The extremely adverse climatic conditions did not deter Tulsidas in venturing out. He mistook a floating corpse in the river as a log of wood and reached the other bank sitting on it. He again mistook a cobra that was hanging by as a rope, which he caught hold of and jumped in the open courtyard of his wife's house. Mamta Devi was stunned to see Tulsidas in such an extraordinary situation. When she came to know the devices he used for making his trip, she was in deep agony. She burst forth, albeit unwittingly, at her husband and told how worthless it was on his part to have such an attachment towards a perishable mortal body and if only he displayed a fraction of such attachment and determination towards God Almighty, his taking birth in this world would not go in vain. The words shook Tulsidas to the core and realisation dawned on him. He was transformed at that very moment. This was God's will. And the mankind got the immortal *Ram Charita Manas.*
13. *"Chumma Iru"* in Tamil. This finds a place in saint's *Kandhar Anubhoothi.*
14. *Muthu* in Tamil means "Pearl".
15. Arunagirinatha had a distinctly special attachment for Vayalur Murugan as is evident by the saint's frequent reverential references to the Lord in several hymns.
16. The Thiruppugazh hymn *"Athala Chedanaar Aada..."* is said to have been sung on this occasion.
17. In a Thiruppugazh hymn *"Moolum Vinai"* (*Thiruchendoor*), Arunagirinatha tells us that Muruga goes in search of faultless devotees living in different places and remains there in their company.
18. The *Siddhi* is known as *Parakaaya Pravesa* (entry into another body form)
19. Arunagirinatha venerates the Lord present at the *entrance to the Northern Tower* of *Thiruvannamalai* Temple Who rescued him, in several of his *Thiruppugazh* songs.

CHAPTER 3

SAINT ARUNAGIRINATHA'S LIFE - SOME INTERESTING INSIGHTS

In the previous chapter, a biographical sketch of Saint Arunagirinatha based on traditional (*Karna Parampara)* belief was outlined. Many interesting insights into the life of the saint have come out of intensive research carried out by a few scholars and archeological experts. Their findings give reasonably accurate clues to Arunagirinatha's birth place and period of his life as also other relevant particulars, based on stone inscriptions, bequests and ancient texts. Foremost among such researchers was late Shri T.A. Gopinatha Rao, who belonged to the Department of Archeology. Rao has revealed that in one of the stone inscriptions found in *Mullandhiram* (also known as Prabhudadevarayapuram) in North Arcot District of Tamil Nadu, there is a reference to the gift of a plot of land in 1550 AD. by a brahmin woman to a temple dedicated to one of her forefathers *Dindimakavi Annamalai Nathar*. He has proved that the said Annamalai Nathar was none other than the Saint Arunagirinatha.

One of the inscriptions on the walls of Siva temple at *Puthoor* near Thiruvannamalai region (1370 A.D) refers to the gift of Puthoor temple and *matam* to one *Somanatha Jeeyar* by the then King Veera Pokkana Udaiyar. Saint Arunagirinatha has honoured Somanatha who was a great devotee of Lord Arunachaleswara in one of his Thiruppugazh songs, *"Oru Vazhi Padaathu"* (Somanathan Matom). *Mullandhiram* mentioned earlier is in proximity to Puthoor. From the inscriptions it is noticed that a few of the poets who lived in these places were known as *Dindima* Poets[1].

Mahavidwan Raghava Iyengar has done a yeoman service in research into Tamil literature and has provided many-a-valuable clue on the life of Saint Arunagirinatha. Raghava Iyengar in his book on *Saäsana Thamizh Kavi Charitham* has written a long essay on Arunagirinatha. In the fifteenth cen-

tury one Rajanatha Kavi had composed a Sanskrit opera entitled *Chaluva Abhyudhayam*. In that opera, Rajanatha Kavi speaks highly of his father Arunagirinatha with many appellations such as *Saarvabhowma Dindima Kavi, Ashtabhasha Parameswarar* etc. Rajanatha Kavi further says that his father was regarded high in *Chera, Chozha* and *Pandya* Kingdoms. From the similarity of time and place it is clear that Arunagirinatha referred to by Rajanatha Kavi is the same Saint Arunagirinatha, composer of *Thiruppugazh* songs. Raghava Iyengar confirms the above theory by referring to a devotional verse composed by *Paghazhi Koothar* in which a reference is made to the 'poet who earlier sang, playing the *Dindima Vaadya*'; this, according to the researcher, is an obvious reference to Saint Arunagirinatha.

Shri C.V. Narayana Iyer, Professor of History, who continued the above research, has also proved that the *Dindima Kavi* is none other than Saint Arunagirinatha.

Valuable glimpses on the life of Arunagirinatha come to light from other sources. From the Foreword to certain Sanskrit plays, it is observed that the saint's family was earlier settled in *Varendra Agrahara* in Rajshaki Taluk of Bengal and it settled in the place known as *Metthaipadi* near *Thiruvannamalai. Vibhaga Ratna Mala* is a book written by someone who came from Arunagirinatha's lineage. According to this book, a *Chozha* King who went on a pilgrimage to *Varanasi* (Kasi), brought eight brahmin families who lived in the banks of river Ganges and were well-versed in *Vedas*, to the South and the migrants settled in *Metthaipadi*[2]. One of these was known as Somanatha. Arunagirinatha who came in this lineage is said to have been ill-treated by his aunt and not being able to put up with the harassment, he spent a night at Siva Temple at *Puthoor*. Siva, it is believed, showered His grace on him and made him a great poet. *Vibhaga Ratna Mala* also says that Arunagirinatha was honoured by King Prabhudadevaraya who ruled Vijaya Nagara empire at that time.

Stories of the saint's life thus differ. But this is not, on any account, a deficiency to be viewed seriously. For, when one dives into the ocean of divine literary works of Arunagirinatha with interest and gets enchanted with their

beauty and elegance, he would not worry needlessly to ascertain the precise biographical accounts of the immortal bard who created them. We experience the sweetness of honey or, smell the fragrance of jasmine without going to the question of origin of sweetness in honey or fragrance in jasmine. Such matters, of course, are of interest to select group of persons, who by their tireless efforts add to the storehouse of knowledge with their well-founded research and useful findings. The admirers of *Thiruppugazh* on that score are indebted to the researchers and scholars who have provided valuable clues to the saint's life, after mature studies.

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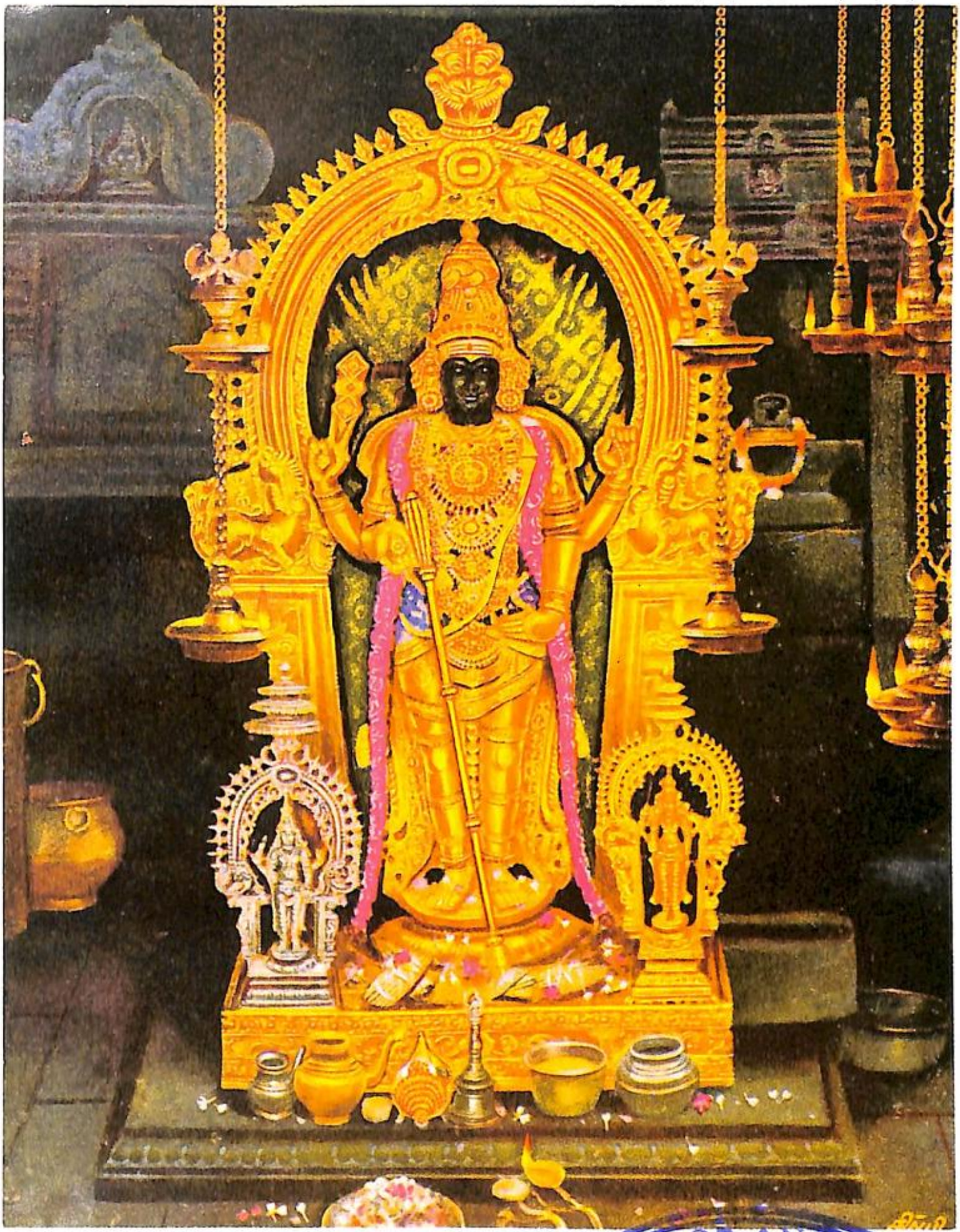
Footnotes

1. *Dindimam* is small percussion instrument. The poet who engages in debate, playing simultaneously the instrument is known as *Dindima Kavi* (Dindima poet). Arunagirinatha refers to *Dindimam* in his *Thiruppazhani Vaguppu*. That the *Dindimam* was prevalent in Ramayana days is evident from a reference to the instrument in *Valmiki Ramayanam*. [Sundara Kaandam, 10th *Sarga* (Line 44)]
2. The author chanced to come across a publication wherein a slightly different version is given. According to this, Chozha King Rajendran III while returning from *Varanasi* (Kasi) brought with him seven Bengali Brahmin families belonging to *Kashyapa, Gowthama, Chandilya, Saavarna, Sree Vatsa, Bharadwaja and Sankrithi Gothras* and settled them in *Thondai mandala*. Rajanatha was among these. Arunagirinatha was born to Rajanatha and Abhirami, also known as Mutthammai. The real name of Arunagirinatha was Sonadharar and his birth place was *Mullindaram*. He was the Tamil poet adorning the Royal Court of Prabhudadevaraya (1422-1446 AD), also known as Veera Vijaya Viroopaksha. Prabhudadevaraya was the son of *Vallalan III*, the king of *Hoysali*. Arunagirinatha belonged to *Gowthama Gothra* (sect) and professed Saama Veda.



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CHAPTER 4

GRANDEUR OF THIRUPPUGAZH

" Neither do you need Vedas
Nor knowledge of all (64) Arts,
Nor music and Naada,
Nor spiritual Texts;
Listen thou (all) daily to Thiruppugazh
Which extols the glory of the Holy Feet
Of the Brave (Muruga)
Who hath attained the fame
As the Primeval Preceptor (to Siva)."[1]

- A Tamil laudatory verse of early times.

Saint Arunagirinatha extolled the glory of Muruga through exquisite Tamil hymns of praise which collectively come under *Thiruppugazh.* These paeans as also other creations of the saint were the medium through which he established direct communion with his *Ishta Devata.* The laudatory offerings of Arunagirinatha come in the sacred lineage of *Thevaram,* the Tamil hymns in glory of Siva, sung by Thiru Jnana Sambhandhar,[2] Thirunavukkarasu Swamigal or Appar Swamigal as he was known (a contemporary of Thiru Jnana Sambhandhar) and Sundaramoorthy Swamigal, as well as *Thiru Vachakam,* sung by Maanikka Vachaga Swamigal, and other priceless Tamil devotional hymns.

'Thiruppugazh' when literally translated would nearly correspond to *'The Propitious Praise'.* Any devotional offering is bound to be magnificent, grand and sacred. More so, when it is offered to Muruga, who is considered as *Muzhu Muthal Kadavul* (God who is Infinite and Whole) and Saviour of mankind in this *Kaliyuga.* Arunagirinatha's creations possess added divinity since his maiden hymn was itself initiated by Lord. The Lord's grace has made these verses immortal, elegant and unparalleled. In stanza 15 of *Kandhar Alankaram,* Arunagirinatha reveals the three noble spots where Muruga

had placed His holy Feet; these are: Peacock (the lord's mount) during travels, celestial subjects (*devaas)* and *Thiruppugazh.* This proves unambiguously the divine accreditation that is given to these sacred verses. The magnificent raga attunements and intricate rhythmic pattern of songs give a vivid insight into the South Indian musical system of yore.

Thiruppugazh indeed represents a synthesis of *Vedas* and *mantras.* One who dwells deep into the philosophical content of *Thiruppugazh* songs would find that these verses constitute the very essense of tenets contained in *Vedas, Upanishads, Aagamas* and *Puranas.* All through his works, Saint Arunagirinatha underscores the need for human beings to get elevated through love and eschewal of carnal desires and egoism. His hymns serve as pole-star to guide humanity which aspires to rise up from its dreary existence.

Arunagirinatha adopts a golden mean when he worships Lord Muruga, his favourite deity and other gods and goddesses. For him, Muruga alone is the ultimate, *Parabrahma.* But while he gives this supreme status to Muruga, he respects and adores other deities who are equally venerated by disciples adhering to different systems[3]. While Arunagirinatha apparently identifies himself as the follower of *Kaumara* system, he is adopting a wholesome medial approach when it comes to his treating other deities. Here lies his unique path of devotion. His hymns bear the stamp of his rare individuality. The *samarasa bhava* (feeling of equality) of Saint Arunagirinatha abundantly revealed in his songs draw people of different disciplines into the fold of *Thiruppugazh.*

The method which Arunagirinatha adopts is to link his *Ishta Devata* with other gods and goddesses by mentioning His family relationship with them. This is indeed an admirable way! The saint knows that Muruga would be pleased when He is addressed as *Vinayaka*'s Brother; Lord Ganesa at the same time would be extremely happy when He hears His younger Brother's name linked to His. Similar approach is made when Muruga is addressed as Siva's divine Son or *Uma's* (Parvathi's) dear Offspring or *Narayana's* valiant Nephew[4]. While doing so, Arunagirinatha would sing to his heart's content the glory and greatness of Ganesa, Siva, Par-

vathi or Narayana with extensive anecdotes from epics and eventually conclude with reference to the relationship Muruga has with any of them! The more of this we shall see in coming chapters.

Thiruppugazh songs are marked for their elegant phraseology and word-structure, unequalled lyrical grace, deep spiritual fervour, sweet melody and unique rhythm. The words used by Arunagirinatha are mostly of ancient Tamil, at times with liberal sprinkling of Sanskrit terms[5]. A fair degree of proficiency in Tamil literature and poetry is a pre-requisite for understanding the real import of these words. In the absence of such skills, it is likely that the words and phrases are wrongly segregated or recited, thereby jeopardising the true substance of what the saint wished to convey. It is for these reasons *Thiruppugazh* is referred to as *Iruppaval* (Iron rice flakes), denoting the inherent strength and depth of words contained in these hymns. Many-a-time a single alphabet would form a word, while some words would really be tongue-twisters. Arunagirinatha's expertise in conveying a whole lot of anecdotes from epics in as many minimum number of words as possible becomes evident when one recites these hymns and the scenes portrayed by him come to the mind clearly. The words and phrases he has used represent the quintessence of his thoughts and feelings.

The poetic beauty of *Thiruppugazh* songs is verily the connoisseur's delight. The meters of these verses are of varying types. Most often they fall in four categories : (a) hymns comprising just four lines, (b) those having four stanzas of two lines each, totalling eight lines, (c) hymns having eight stanzas of two lines each, totalling sixteen lines, and (d) those consisting of eight stanzas of three lines each, totalling 24 lines. The lengthy songs have lines as much as 48 (eight stanzas of six lines each)[6] and 72 lines (eight stanzas of nine lines each)[7]; these are, however, smaller in number. The opening words of each line in songs coming under category (a) rhyme with each other. Such rhymes occur at the beginning of the first, third, fifth and seventh lines of songs under category (b). The first, fifth, ninth and thirteenth lines of hymns categorized under (c) have rhyming words at the beginning.

In verses included in category (d), the opening words of the first, seventh, thirteenth and nineteenth lines are set to rhyme.

The devotional content of *Thiruppugazh* songs has no parallel. The central theme of these hymns is Arunagirinatha's absolute and unreserved surrender to Muruga. This is on par with the *Saranaagathi* philosophy of Vaishnavites. The saint firmly believes that Muruga would respond to the sincere call of a devotee who surrenders to Him with absolute faith and unbiased love. The path of devotion *(Bhakthi Marga)* depicted in these songs would lead one to God-realisation and liberation. Some songs contain passages which closely resemble *namaavalis* (a row of names or synonyms) in praise of a particular deity, say Ganesa, Siva, Parvathi, Vishnu or Muruga. By chanting these holy names and offering flowers *(archana)*, a devotee can get the grace of his *Ishta Devata* (deity of one's choice). It is doubtful whether any other sacred hymn confers a similar advantage to devotees having different *Ishta Devatas*. It looks as though Arunagirinatha, with the grace of Muruga, foresaw what was in store for mankind in farther years to come in Kali Yuga—harassed mass of people, with hurry encompassed into their existence and hurdles coming in the way of righteous acts and thus made *Thiruppugazh* an easy and convenient devotional means for their upliftment, out of unbounded compassion.

Let us look at Arunagirinatha's philosophical thoughts which are reflected in his sacred hymns. The saint did not believe in *yogis* who engage themselves in self-inflicted tortures aimed at prolonging the transient physical frame. He also wanted to get out of delusion created by mind which treated the self, the body and other objects of the Universe, as separate and distinct entities. His antipathy towards undisciplined *yogic* practices and his ardent desire to become *'Siva yogi'* are clearly brought out in *Thiruppugazh* song *'Anitthamaana'* which he sang in Thiruvaanaikka shrine:

Stating that he does not want to become a *'fatigued and foolish yogi, who practises stoppage of breathing by blocking nostrils, adopts fruitless methods and takes in plenty of medicinal herbs to prolong this ephemeral body"*, Arunagirinatha seeks the grace of Muruga *"to destroy the pains arising out of malam (im-*

purity) and maaya (illusion) and to make him a 'Siva Swaroopa Maha Yogi' possessed of Jnana (knowledge), Aachara (disciplined routine) and Sraddha (endeavour) and who transcends the reach of the mind which differentiates the self, the body and all other objects in the Universe."

In the above verse, the saint has delineated the characteristics of *yogis* who practise *yoga* with the aim to prolong the life[8] and the enlightened *Siva yogis* who have Muruga's Lotus Feet as their sole ultimate objective. He wants to be one among the latter, and his choice serves as an ideal pointer to seekers of spiritual bliss.

In his hymn *'Ari Marugoné...'* devoted to *Vayalur* Muruga, Arunagirinatha requests his favourite deity, for *upadesa* (divine preaching) on the intricacies of *'Pathi Pasu Paasam'*, the three eternal concepts. He tells the Lord regretfully, *"I, who haven't (thought and) spoken even on a day (about) Thy holy Feet, this humble (man) who knoweth not even a little, (Muruga) may I receive (from you) Pathi Pasu Paasopadesam!"*[9]. The saint in the hymn *'Dasaiyaagiya'* sung at Karuvoor implores the Lord to wipe out his egoism (characteristic of *'Pasu'*), release him from the bonds of attachment (*'Paasam'*) and bless him to reach the *'Anubhoothi'* stage when he would remain constantly meditating upon the God Almighty (*'Pathi'*), Who is comprehensible through *'Jnana'* (knowledge) and Who constitutes the Whole and is Formless.

In the first half of many of the *Thiruppugazh* songs, the Saint Arunagirinatha usually describes the sad plight of human beings who take birth in this world. The saint in many of his hymns has vividly portrayed the lengthy and the painful process of life and death of human beings taking birth in this world. The ordeal begins right from conception and the individual thereafter passes through a series of stages; a darling babe in arms later going on all fours; energetic lad; happy, handsome and robust youth, adult adept in skills and a householder and lastly the trembling old man. Arunagirinatha elaborates how the life is wasted by men who blinded by lust and passion, indulge themselves in ephemeral worldly pleasures, assuming that the body is immortal. They amass wealth, toiling and moiling. They flatter people who in

fact do not deserve to be praised, in order to earn their livelihood[10]. Simultaneously, they suffer from a wide variety of bodily diseases, which sap their energy. We are bewildered at the long list of diseases which the saint-poet gives in hymn after hymn. As the days pass by, without the individual's contributing anything significant for being born in this world, old age sets in with its inevitable consequences. Arunagirinatha, in his own inimitable style, has described the manifestations of old age in many songs: The dark, black hair has turned white as crane, teeth have come off, the radiance of eyes has dimmed resembling spongy cotton, the facial glow has vanished, the back is bent as though it is a bow, walking with the aid of a stick has become necessary, and the person is declared as 'old man'and he becomes an object of ridicule. Around this time, diseases gain momentum and strike him with added force and the man becomes a tattered, helpless creature.

After discussing the various sufferings that men have to undergo, the saint, towards the end of the first half of the songs, seeks the grace of Muruga to keep him away from vices and diseases and pleads for grant of specific favours from the Lord. This is what every devotee would aspire for. Then follows, in the second half, the worship of Muruga usually characterised by a graphic description of one or two anecdotes extracted from great epics such as *Ramayana, Mahabharatha, Skandapurana* etc., where the saint ultimately links his favourite Lord with Ganesa, Siva, Parvathi and Narayana, as indicated earlier.

Humility was the hall-mark of Arunagirinatha. By his self-abasement in many of his *Thiruppugazh* verses, the saint-poet shows the worldly-minded the way to attain the grace of Muruga. It would be a grievous error to link the saint, who was the embodiment of piety and knowledge, with the series of negative traits which he has attributed to himself in these hymns. The characteristics narrated by him self-deprecatingly are directed at those men and women, who tend to be egoistic and feel proud over their superiority in education, knowledge, strength, beauty or wealth, without the least thought that he or she owed these to the largesse of Muruga

or their own *Ishta Devata* (chosen deity for worship). They are blissfully unaware that they are living in a fool's paradise and that their ephemeral acquisitions and achievements vanish into thin air the moment the God, who provided these, withdraws His grace.

Let us see a couple of *Thiruppugazh* songs where Arunagirinatha engages in self-deprecation, bearing in mind the facts mentioned in preceding paragraph.

"I have no strength (of devotion), I am virtueless, I am incompetent, I have not done anything remarkable, I don't have true devotion, I don't engage in subtle meditation, I don't have a place even in heaven. I am stranger to charity and I lack articulateness to sing(in) fine Tamil", so says Arunagirinatha when he stands before the Lord at *Pazhani*, in the hymn beginning *"Thidamili...."*

In the hymn *"Seeralasadan...."*, again sung at *Pazhani*, Arunagirinatha decries himself by saying: *"I am a dullard who hisses with fury, doer of misdeeds, one who lacks morality, who is spiteful engaged in harmful acts, one who has the nature to seek only the disease that is birth; one who has not even little of greatness, morals, discipline, righteousness and excellence, the evil person who combines ferocious falsehood in his utterances, ignorant and dissipated who does not desire to worship at Thy (Muruga's) Feet."*

Arunagirinatha in effect advises us to ruthlessly avoid all the vices and weaknesses enumerated by him and follow humbly the path of love and right conduct, if we are to win the grace of Muruga. The mankind should ever be indebted to the saint for showing to it an ideal way of living through *Thiruppugazh*.

The author has had occasions to come across certain critical comments made by some persons who apparently after a study of *Thiruppugazh* with reference to its poetic content, seem a little uncomfortable over the saint's explicit narration of matters which appeal to senses in some of the songs, notwithstanding the fact that these are condemned at the same breath by the saint-poet. These analysts also wonder whether it was necessary for Arunagirinatha to give a detailed account of a number of diseases in his hymns. They

have felt that for these reasons expunction of certain portions becomes necessary while rendering the songs.

The author's intention is not to join issue on the above observations, since these are based on perceptions of individual minds. He would, however, like to state that Arunagirinatha was an *Aäsu Kavi* and songs came to him voluntarily as they were. *Thiruppugazh* songs are not to be regarded as ordinary lyrics that are composed by a lyricist and later on some one infuses music into them. In the latter case there is always the question of ethics and public acceptance. The fact that *Thiruppugazh* songs have stood the test of time for six centuries bear ample testimony to their divinity. When a devotee like Arunagirinatha who, as is widely believed, was initiated in the sacred task of singing Muruga's glory by the Lord Himself, pours out his heart at his favourite deity, no barrier comes between him and the Lord. The inhibitions in regard to physical appearance and utterances arise out of one's own mental make-up and reflect the not-so-mature outlook of the individual. These do not apply to great men and liberated souls who are far above these illusions. Readers can find situations, which are similar in nature, in Jayadeva's *Geetha Govindam (Ashtapadhi)*, the epic *Bhagavatham* and Adi Sankara's *Soundarya Lahiri*. If the basic difference between the outlook of these pious and great men and we the ordinary men is properly understood, it would not be difficult to get over the discomfiture referred to in the earlier paragraph. On the same strength, Arunagirinatha's vivid narration of diseases is also not inapt, since these have been, in one form or another, afflicting the human beings and we may say that the saint, in all his kindness towards the humanity, was praying to Lord Muruga to free them specifically from *each* of these diseases. The author also does not believe that those who sing *Thiruppugazh* songs are compelled to omit certain portions.

Thiruppugazh songs attract the musically-minded on more than one count. First, their superb *raaga* attunements. The traditional way of presenting the hymns is of course by following age-old *Panns*. Arunagirinatha in his *Bhootha Vethala Vaguppu* has given a full list of *raagas* prevalent at that time.

These are *Varaali, Sikhandigai, Seekhamaram, Vibhanjigai, Gaudi, Bhairavi, Lalithai, Kaisikai, Gowli, Malahari, Bhowli, Ghana Varaadi, Pada Manjari,* Dhanaasi, Panchami, Desi and Kurinji. The descriptions as to the derivatives, grammar and character of these *raagas,* given by the saint speak of his mature understanding of music and its related aspects. The uniqueness of *Thiruppugazh* songs is that they are adaptable to be set in various *raagas,* as obtaining in Carnatic as well as Hindustani style. What is required is that while setting them to particular notes or *raagas,* there should be no rupturing of words. If that happens, the meaning and content may undergo change with their adverse repercussions. And, of course, they should be in harmony with *laya*[11].

The beauty of *Thiruppugazh* songs, next to *raagas,* lies in its *laya* or rhythm *(Chandham).* This is an aspect which would easily baffle the uninitiated. A vivid description of *Thaalas* which were prevalent during Saint Arunagirinatha's period as also their grammatical structuring can be found again in *Bhootha Vethala Vaguppu.* This hymn refers to *Pancha Thaalas* (five time measures), namely, *Urgaditham, Chacchapudam, Saasapudam, Shadpitha puthikam* and *Sampatthu Vettam.* These *Thaalas* are believed to have emerged out of the five divine faces of Siva, viz.. *Sadhyojata, Vamadeva, Aghora, Tatpurusha* and *Ishana.* Several *bhoothas* and *vethalaas* were said to be producing sound in conformity with these *Thaalas,* either by tapping both their palms or using cymbals made of bronze, in harmony with the music of an instrument known as *chacchari.* Muruga is said to have relished the incoherent utterings of these creatures (which they regarded as songs) accompanied by rhythmic tapping of their palms in sheer ecstasy in the battle field[12]. *Thiruppugazh* songs reveal themselves as masterly creations in the art of time measures (which is an integral part of chaste music), set as they are in 35 basic *Thaalas,* 175 *Thaalas* formed out of tempo variations and in 108 *Thaalas* which are known as *Maarga Thaalas* as also in *Sankeerna Thaalas*[13].

The devotional poems or other verses usually contain an identification mark (*Mudra* as it is known), revealing the identity of its versifier. For instance, Saint *Thyagaraja's* composi-

tions invariably contain his *Mudra 'Thyagaraja'* and Sri *Muthuswamy Dikshitar's* krithis carry his *Mudra 'Guru Guha'*. The last stanza, usually the tenth, of Thiru Jnana Sambhandar's *Thevaram* songs contain the name *'Jnana Sambhandhan'*. *Thiruppugazh* songs differ in this respect. They do not bear Arunagirinatha's name. Most of them end in the word *Perumaale* ('the great individual', when loosely translated) while a few conclude with *Thampiraane* (The Lord)[14]. In fact these serve as means of identification of *Thiruppugazh* songs, apart from, of course, other masterly poetic aspects connected with these songs.

Arunagirinatha while extolling the glory of Muruga residing in various holy places has, quite often, admired the natural beauty and vegetation that surround the shrines. These find a lucid expression in his verses revealing the saint's poetic imagination. *Thirupparamkundram*, according to the saint, is *"resourceful and abounds in woods with trees whose heights touch the moon and the sun*[15]*"*. Rising plantain trees and turmeric and ginger crops are referred to in a *Thiruchendoor* hymn.[16] *Pazhani* is said to have groves of jack fruit trees with honey flowing down from ripe jack fruits and thick growth of groves of arecanut trees[17]. The saint finds a vast number of mango groves in *Swamimalai*[18]. The *Chozha* region is eulogized as the area where fine quality of paddy is grown in fields because they contain the accumulated essence of ripe mangoes which burst[19]. *Viralimalai* is characterised by cool groves which are not affected by sunshine; they flourish and rise sky high, looking green, and plenty of watery flowers bloom in lakes resulting from daily incessant rains[20]. Arunagirinatha mentions about groves of fragrant jasmine flowers which have flourished as thick forests and presence of beautiful gardens in *Vadamullaivayil*[21]. Many more such examples can be given. The picture which the saint has presented gives us an idea of the then prevalent abundance of natural wealth and unpolluted environments. It is a moot point whether we can boast of such a phenomenon today.

One incidental observation which the author would like to make is the occasional occurrence of alien words such as *Salaam*[22] and *Shabhash*[23] in *Thiruppugazh* songs, which is in-

dicative of the religious climate prevalent during the life time of Saint Arunagirinatha. The saint himself addresses his Lord as *Raavuthan*[24].

What is that one gets if he recites or sings Thiruppugazh? As Arunagirinatha says in one of his songs, *"devotees of East, West, South and North proclaim the 'pictorial- poetry-oriented' Thiruppugazh as marvellous"*[25]. Such is their popularity and charm, possessing as they are, *mantra* effects. The songs yield immense benefits to the good and pious people. On the contrary, the sacred hymns will not be kind to those who scoff at them and at devotees who recite them. In Arunagirinatha's words:

" To heads of those who are irate (with devotees singing the glory of Muruga)

To kinsmen of those who are inimical (to devotees of Muruga)

To the lives of killers and to those who deride (Thiruppugazh)

To those who speak ill of (devotees of Muruga),

Thiruppugazh will be Fire, let's understand that....."

"(Thiruppugazh) will fulfil all desires (that the devotee of Muruga has in mind)

And melt one's soul,

(Thiruppugazh) will sever the murky chain of births

Thus not to be born again,

(Thiruppugazh) will burn away even Fire and crush the mountain....."[26]

Such is the greatness of *Thiruppugazh*. It is believed that even to recite these hymns, the grace of Muruga is necessary. As the old Tamil adage goes, it is rare that one gets birth as a human being in this world and it is rarer that he be born without any physical deformities. Arunagirinatha has shown an ideal way to get benefit out of this rare distinction conferred on those who have taken birth in this Universe. That is to sing the glory of Muruga through *Thiruppugazh* and other devotional gems composed by him with a feeling of devotion. Muruga would readily respond to the simple

respectful prayers of his devotees and as many elders have pointed out, it is immaterial whether he or she is adept in the musical aspects associated with these verses.

The presentation of a few extracts from *Thiruppugazh* songs reflecting the saint's anguish over the endless cycle of births and deaths the human beings are subjected to, numerous diseases afflicting them, the unlimited wants of men and the dread of death, would be an appropriate ending of this chapter. By his sincere entreaties to his Lord, Saint Arunagirinatha pleads for release of human beings from such ordeals and miseries.

(i) To Swaminatha, the presiding deity of *Swamimalai*, the saint requests that the Lord of death be kept away from him:

" Let Kaala[27] *not near me,*

(Muruga) Bless me Thee (with wisdom) to surrender

At Thine Twin Feet....." [28]

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(ii) Tormented by diseases which afflict the human body in every birth, the saint pleads with the Lord of *Thirutthani* that he be freed from such afflictions:

"Let not diseases afflict me at every birth,

(Muruga) Grant me Thee succour at Thine Feet....." [29]

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(iii) The prayers of Arunagirinatha in one of the *Thiruppugazh* songs offered to the Lord manifested in *Virinjipuram (Kharapuri)* are indeed heart-warming and could verily be one among our daily prayers. He prays:

" Let all (my) woes cease

And all virtues come (to me)

Let me be fit to achieve

fame in the earth;

(Muruga) bless me to remember ever

With love Thy lotus Feet....." [30]

❖ ❖ ❖

(iv) Addressing the Lord at *Thiruvavinankudi,* the saint-composer says:

" Caught in the (web of) dreaded delusion

Wandering aimlessly is this underling in the earth

(Muruga) come Thee saying: "Don't despair !"

In my mind for knowledge to flourish

And for hurdles to crumble,

(Muruga) Bestow me the bliss of Jnana

That springs forth from Thine grace ...." [31]

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(v) Arunagirinatha displays his despair and helplessness when he pours out to the Lord at *Thiruvarunai*:

"..... the body that's packed

With wrathful diseases of several crores,

Impossible it's for me,

Having no clear conscience,

To carry it any longer

And wander in this world:

With my tongue to praise

Thy propitious Thiruppugazh

(Muruga Thee) Give me Siva Jnana Siddhi....." [32]

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(vi) Arunagirinatha enumerates pathetic situation of men arising out of their unending stream of wants, in one of his *Thiruppugazh* Songs sung at *Kathirkaamam*. See his eloquent description:

" Clothes do I need to attire (myself)

Sumptuous food to satisfy the mighty hunger,

For a lustrous body,

(Need I) water (for bathing) and (costly) dress;

Remedies to destroy diseases affecting the body,

A young woman (wife) to remain indoors,

A home of my own to sleep;

Having gain'd all these (facilities)

Become I a householder, getting immersed

In that delusory ocean (called household)

And support the vast kinsmen;

(My) life will (thus) pass away in waste;

(Muruga, hence) Thee beckon me and

Bestow me a compassionate heart

And Consciousness of Jnana,

Tossed about am I,

Because of Fate,

In the mountainous whirlwind of births,

(I am) Waiting for the day

When (Muruga) Thee'd give me succour ! ....." [33]

Arunagirinatha thus presents a candid picture of all that happens right from the day one is born in this world, and his trials and tribulations. The saint conveys the message that only way for the worldly-minded for emancipation is ad-

herence to good thoughts and deeds, display of fellow-feeling towards others and constant remembrance of Muruga and recitation of holy hymns on Him. *Thiruppugazh* is an exemplary means to win His grace - that is its singular grandeur.

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Footnotes

1. *Vedham Vendaam Sakala Vitthai Vendaam Geetha*
   Naadham Vendaam Jnana Nool Vendaam Aadhi
   Gurup pugazhai Mevuginra Kotravan Thaal Pottrum
   Thiruppugazhai Keleer Dhinam."
2. *Thiru Jnana Sambhandhar* lived in the early part of the Seventh century. He was born in Sirkazhi in South India. What is remarkable about the saint-poet is that he had the taste of milk of *Siva Jnana* offered at the hands of Goddess Parvathi Herself, when he was just three. The child, so blessed, sang his maiden hymn beginning with the words *Thodudaiya Chevian* (Lord having ears adorned with stud) when Siva and His holy Consort gave him *darshan* mounted on the majestic Bull - a privilege which Jnana Sambhandhar's orthodox father, who was with the child, did not have. There is a school of thought which considers Thiru Jnana Sambhandhar as Muruga's incarnation since Goddess Parvathi had offered divine milk to him. Tamil appellations of the saint - *Aaludaiya Pillaiyar* and *Puramerithaar Thirumaganaar* have arisen because of this belief. Saint Arunagirinatha's reverential references to Jnana Sambhandhar also seem to support this theory. Adi Shankara has referred to Thiru Jnana Sambhandhar as *Dravida Sisu* in his *Soundarya Lahiri* (Stanza - 75). It is a coincidence that number of *Thevaram* Songs composed by Thiru Jnana Sambhandhar and Thiruppugazh songs of Arunagirinatha is the same - 16,000.
3. The six *Samayas* (*Shanmathas*) or cults established by Adi Shankaracharya are : *Gaanapathya* (relating to Ganesa), *Saiva* (relating to Siva), *Saaktha* (relating to Shakti or Parvathi), *Kaumara* (relating to *Kumara* or Muruga), *Vaishnava* (relating to Vishnu) and *Sowrya* (relating to *Surya* or Sun). A few scholars perceive a common mission between Adi Sankaracharya and Arunagirinatha through a comparative analysis of the approaches of two great *gurus* and their devotional works.
4. Arunagirinatha addresses Muruga as "the Grandson of Menai" in couplet 29 of *'Thiruvelaikkaaran Vaguppu'*. Menai is the mother of Goddess Parvathi (Muruga's Mother) and Himavaan's wife.

5. Please see Footnote 11 on page 61, Chapter 6.
6. *"Ethir porudhu...."* (*Kodumkunram* Thiruppugazh)
7. *"Edhamuru..."* (*Viralimalai* Thiruppugazh)
8. This branch of *yoga* goes by the name *"Hatha Yoga"*.
9. *Pathi* : God Almighty (*Paramaatma*); *Pasu* : Individual (*Jeevaatma*); *Paasam:* Attachment.
10. Arunagirinatha has given an impressive list of flatteries in the *Thiruppugazh* hymn *"Mughilum Eraviyum"* (*Thirutthani*). Unmerited persons are adulated as cloud (in benevolence), the Sun (in the dazzle of fame), brilliant pearl (in sweetness), Manmatha (in handsomeness), Karna (in charity), etc.
11. A well-known vocalist of the Carnatic music has brought out an audio cassette of *Thiruppugazh,* where the songs are admirably rendered in a pure classical *kutcheri* style. *Thiruppugazh Anbargal's* way of presenting these songs has no parallel.
12. *"Paanigal kottum Peygal Pithatrum*
Paadalai Mechum Kathirvela." Kavi Uduthum (*Chidambaram*)
13. Six *Angaäs* (components) to *Thaalas* are *Anudhritham, Dhritham, Laghu, Guru, Plutham and Kaakapaadham. Thaalas* prevalent today mostly occur in *Laghu, Dritham* and *Anudhritham.* The seven *Thaalas* that are prevalent today are *Dhruvam, Madyam, Rupakam, Thriputai, Ata, Jambai and Ekam.* Because of variations of *Jaathi* (caste) namely *Thisram, Chathusram, Misram, Sankeernam and Khandam,* the *Aksharäs* of *laghu* change as under:

Thisram Laghu	3	Aksharäs	
Chathusram Laghu	4	Aksharäs	
Misram Laghu	7	Aksharäs	
Sankeernam Laghu	9	Aksharäs	
Khandam Laghu	5	Aksharäs	$\frac{\text{Misra(7)+Thisra(3)}}{2}$

The combination of seven *Thaalas* with five *Jaathis* produce 35 *Thaalas* (7x5). These 35 *Thaalas* expand to 175 (35x5) when they adapt themselves to the tempo of these five *Jaathis.*

14. There appears to be some exception to this: The author chanced to see Arunagirinatha's *Mudra,* that is, his own name, appearing in a Thirutthani *Thiruppugazh, 'Varikkalai Inigaraana'.* At the end of *Mayil Viruttham,* the saint has given his name, as having sung these hymns. In *Periamatam Thiruppugazh* starting with *Kalahavizhi,* the saint addresses Muruga Himself as Arunagirinatha.
15. *" Kanakan thiral....."*
16. *"Kamala maadhudan....."*
17. *"Thakara Narumalar....."*
18. *" Paadhi mathi....."*
19. *"Aangudal.....",* (Thirumandhurai)

20. *"Kodaadhavanaiye....."*
21. *"Anichevviar....."*
22. *"Avaamaru...."* - (*Swamimalai*) -Thiruppugazh and the Tenth *Viruttham* of *Mayil Viruttham.*
23. *"Pacchai yon giri...."* - *Thirunallar* Thiruppugazh.
24. *Raavuthan* - Horse rider
    - *Kandhar Alankaram* - stanzas 37, 50.
25. *Bhakthar Gana Priya* - *Thiruchengode* Thiruppugazh.
26. *Chinatthavar Mudikkum....*
    - *Thirutthani* Thiruppugazh
    [27] Lord of Death, Also Known as *Yama.*
28. *" Paathi Mathi Nathi....."* - *Swamimalai* Thiruppugazh.
29. *" Irumalu Roga....."* - *Thirutthani* Thiruppugazh.
30. *" Oruvarai Chirumanai....."* - *Virinjipuram* Thiruppugazh.
31. *" Sivanaär Manam Kulira....."* - *Thiruvavinankudi* Thiruppugazh.
32. *" Valivaadha Pitthamodu....."* - *Thiruvarunai* Thiruppugazh.
33. *"Udukka Thugil Vénum....."* - *Kathirkaamam* Thiruppugazh.

CHAPTER 5

GAANAAPATHYA AND ARUNAGIRINATHA

"Thou art Brahma, Thou art Vishnu,
Thou art Rudra, Thou art Indra,
Thou art Fire, Thou art Air, Thou art the
Sun, Thou art the Moon, Thou art
Brahm, Bhoohu, Bhuvah, Swah and Om."[1]

- Ganapathi Atharvaseersh.

If we are to mention the sacred name of a Hindu deity without whose grace no human attempts would ever succeed, the name of *Sri Ganapathi*[2] comes at once reverentially in our minds. The foremost to be venerated at the beginning of all auspicious functions right from initiating one's child into learning *(Vidyaarambham)* is Ganapathi, who is the remover of obstacles coming in the way of successful conduct of these functions. Apart from numerous temples solely devoted to Lord Ganapathi, we will find always a Ganesa shrine in all major temple complexes and the worship of Ganesa precedes that of other deities in accordance with Vedic dictum. In fact this is the privilege which the divine Parents of Ganesa has granted to Him. In villages particularly in South India, one will notice idols of Ganesa installed at the foot of pepul trees near the river banks giving a high degree of visibility to the idol of the Lord.

Ganapathi is regarded as *'Mangala Moorthy'* - the repository of propitiousness and the provider of knowledge, success and prosperity to those who worship Him ardently. He wards off all hurdles. Ganesa is the personification of *Omkara* and the omnipresent *Brahman. Ganapathi Atharvaseersh* proclaims that Ganapathi constitutes the Five Elements, namely, *Prithvi, Aap, Agni, Vayu* and *Aäkash* and the four types of *Vaani,* viz. *Paraa, Pashyanthi, Madhyamaa* and *Vaikhari.* The

Lord is generally believed to be divine *Brahmachari* (bachelor); there is, however, a view that *Vallabai* is His divine Consort. Several Sanskrit pieces of literature extol the glory of Ganapathi, viz. *Ganesa Samhita, Ganesa Thaapaneey, Ganesa Purana, Mudgala Purana* and *Vinayaka Maahatmyam*. By His very name, it is evident that the Lord is the leader of all *ganas*. Those who primarily worship Ganapathi and regard Him as the Absolute Supreme are followers of *Gaanaapathya* Cult, one of the six cults evolved by Adi Sankaracharya, referred to in Chapter 4.

While the Lord is venerated by His devotees spread all over the country (and in several countries abroad), in India, the State of Maharashtra has perhaps a much larger following of Gaanaapathya[3], where eight famous holy shrines of Ganapathi (called *Ashta Vinayak*) are located. These are at : Morgaon, Theur, Lenyadri, Ozar, Ranjangaon, Pali, Mahad and Siddhatek. The presiding Lord at these sacred shrines is known as *Moreshwar, Chintamani, Girijatmaj, Vigneshwar, Mahaganapathi, Ballaleshwar, Varad Vinayak* and *Siddhivinayak*, in that order.[4]

Ganapathi manifests Himself majestically with an elephant head and four hands. One of the tusks is featured to be broken. *Ganesa Purana* associates this with the Lord's battle against the demon *Gajamukhaasura*. (See footnote 5 page 49). In certain temples, He is shown to have six hands. In Ranjangaon shrine in Maharashtra, the deity has five trunks and ten hands. The Lord's mount (*Vahana*) is mouse (*Mooshika*)[5]. But in Morgaon, one of the eight famed temples of Vinayaka mentioned earlier, Ganesa has adopted His younger Brother Muruga's gorgeous mount, Peacock, as His mount. In certain other temples, Ganesa's mount is shown as lion. In the famous Sthaanumaalayan temple in Suchindrum, near Kanyakumari in South India, Ganesa is sculptured on a pillar in a rare feminine form and He carries the name '*Vigneshwari*'.

Arunagirinatha has given Lord Ganapathi the rightful exalted status. In his poetical creations like *Thiruppugazh, Kandhar Alankaram, Kandhar Andhadhi, Kandhar Anuboothi, Vel-Mayil Viruttham, Cheval Viruttham* and *Vedicchi Kaavalan Vaguppu*, the saint makes reverential references to Ganapathi. The

saint's intense devotion to Vigneswara, the omni-potent, is evident from these hymns. He fondly says *'our* Ganapathi' in certain hymns. The impressive physical manifestation of the Lord, His heroic acts as found in *puraanaas*, a series of Lord's favourite food items, the ideal manner of worshipping Ganapathi - all these are presented magnificently in these verses. The saint is apparently happy and proud that his favourite deity, Muruga, is the younger Brother of such a valiant and benevolent god, Vinayaka. The style in which the saint has portrayed Ganapathi is indeed inimitable and makes deep imprints in the minds of those who recite these songs.

Let us see a few graphic descriptions contained in some of the hymns:

(a) "(Ganesa) Who consumes handful of fruits, *appam*[6], rice flakes and puffed rice; He resides in the wisdom of disciples who learn; if one calls out at Him as *Karpagam*[7], his distresses vanish quickly; He was the very first who wrote the entire Triple Tamil (*Mutthamizh)*[8] appropriately on the supreme mountain (Meru); the extremely brave who smashed the wheel-bolts *(acchu)* of Siva's chariot when He started off to destroy the Three worlds *(Muppuram)*: one who appeared as elephant in the forest when (His younger Brother) Subramania was in anguish (arising out of love with Valli) and blessed young Muruga to marry that hunter girl (Valli) that very moment". - *"Kaithala Nirai Kani ....."*

(Thiruppugazh)

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(b) "(Ganesa) Who for the sake of (younger) Brother
Appeared in the forest;
Who came in possession of the divine Fruit
By circumambulating the Father;
(The Lord) who is a Stable Support for devotees;
(who is) Five-armed and elephant-headed"

- "Vumbar Tharu Dhenu Mani....."

(Thiruppugazh)

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(c) *" The Ocean of Grace" that is unparalleled*

' Vignasamarthar',
who hath, as His food,
Sugarcane, flat beans, delicious fruits,
Jaggery, ghee-mixed daal,
Til, puffed rice, rice flakes,
Red gram and tender coconut;
'Bee-pollute[9]', green gram, varieties of appam,
Raw rice, Pittu[10], cucumber, (grounded) flour, etc..;
Roots that are distinct
And fine edibles and chickpea gram..."

- "Pakkarai Vichitramani...."
(Thiruppugazh)

(d) " I won't forget to circumambulate the venerated, elephant-headed, single tusked Ganesa who has a holy Hand, which gladly takes the luxuriously-offered nectar, triple fruits[11], *appam*, fresh milk, honey, long and twisted *murukku*[12], sugarcane, *laddu*, colourful and lustrous rice, *daal*, rice flakes, *til*, puffed rice, matchlessly delicious plantain fruits, and tender coconut; (Ganesa) whose trunk penetrated into the ocean containing unparalleled *makara* fishes[13]."

"(I won't forget) to offer flowers that are fitting, to recite devotional hymns in praise (of the Lord), to perform *thoppanam*[14] holding both the ears with fully raised hands and to do *kuttu*[15], and to perform *archana* at (the Lord's) lotus-like beautiful Feet, adorned with anklets." *-"Ninathu Thiruvadi...."*
(Thiruppugazh)

(e) "(Ganesa) Who takes chickpea gram (*kadalai*), puffed rice, flat beans (*avarai*), varieties of fruits, sugarcane etc., who has a belly having many curves, who has a marvellous *mummadham*, who has small eyes like lotus petals and who has an elephant's head."
- "Kadalai Pori Aval...."
(Pazhani Thiruppugazh)

(f) "(Ganesa) who has the head of an elephant, which has force (*Madham*) gushing forth from it, and who wrote the ancient great epic "*Bhaaratam*" on the mighty Meru mountain that day....." - " *Maaya Vaadai.....*"

(ThiruchendoorThiruppugazh)

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(g) "Ganesa, being worshipped with floral offerings at His two holy Feet; (the Lord) who took into His big belly plenty of pure puffed rice, rice flakes, red gram *daal* and green gram; (who was) being offered as holy food (*neivedyam*) triple fruits[16] with a loving heart; (Lord) who wrote, with His single hefty tusk, the whole story of *Gurunathas* (that are *Pandavaas*) on the northern Meru mountain, even as the sage (Vyasa) narrated it; "

"(That) matchless elephant (Ganesa) began trumpeting looking at the tempestuous speed of the Peacock, with fully spread plumes, which took round of the Universe surrounded by lengthy oceans in the wink of an eye - (the peacock) rode by Muruga, Who fought against the four demonic regiments comprising elephants, chariots, horses and infantry."

- *"Vadhai Pazhaga....."*

(Thiruppugazh - common hymn.[17]*)*

(h) "(Ganesa) Who once upon a time broke His tusk and wrote *Bhaaratam*, which was to shine outside the Meru (mountain), who has the complexion of *Bhaanu* (Sun), and who has a diminutive *vaahana* (mount) (mouse)." - *"Cheer Chirakku meni...."*

(Pazhamuthircholai Thiruppugazh.)

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(i)" Ganapathi Who has the holy mouth which devours til, puffed rice, *appam*, fruits, sugarcane, jaggery, coconut, chickpea gram *(kadalai)* and sugar candy into His large heavy belly; *Karpaga* Vinayaka who has a gorgeous trunk which takes in rice balls; (who is) three-eyed; our brave single-tusked, elephant-headed, mountain-sized god who has glowing spots (on His *masthaka)."* - *"Punamadandhaikku..."*

(Kancheepuram Thiruppugazh)

(j)"The Lord (Prabhu), known as *Vigna Vinayaka*, who has the beautiful face of an elephant; the glorious (god) who holds *Ankusa* and *Paasa* in His hands; (who is) single-tusked; big-bellied; three-eyed; valiant Ganapathi (King of *Ganaas)*, destroyer of destiny and passions of those who worship Him; our Vinayaka, *Nakkar* (Siva)'s son, Karpaga Vinayaka, who is of mountainous size." - *'Anjana Vel Vizhi....'*

(Thiruvaanaikka Thiruppugazh)

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(k) *"(Vinayaka) Who slew the audacious Gajamukhaasura*
Who, confronting (the Lord), waged a battle;
(Vinayaka) who broke a hefty tusk of His own
And wrote the story of Bhaarata on mountain Meru;
(Vinayaka) who placed on earth Sivalinga
That was lovingly worshipped by mighty Raavana
By adorning it with fresh garlands;[18]
(The Lord) who hath three eyes;
Would support (my endeavour)."

Cheval Viruttham Kaappu.

Apart from above, Arunagirinatha directly and simply addresses Muruga as the younger Brother of Ganapathi in several *Thiruppugazh* songs. The saint also invokes the blessings of Ganapathi before he starts his *Kandhar Andhadhi, Kandhar Alankaram* and *Kandhar Anuboothi*. There is a reference to Vinayaka in *Vedicchi Kaavalan Vaguppu* too.

Thus we see in Arunagirinatha's works, a liberal quantum of impressive prayers at the lotus Feet of Ganapathi. Truly they reflect the saint's unflinching faith in the Supreme Lord's grace for making his mission a success - the noble mission to sing the glory of Muruga for the benefit of mankind. That Ganesa showered His unlimited grace on the saint is proved by the invaluable immortal gems that sprang forth from Arunagirinatha's sacred tongue. The saint's references to epics relating to Ganesa and His valiant actions amply reveal

his profound knowledge of these ancient literary works. The exhaustive list of Ganesa's favourite food items as given by Arunagirinatha would serve as an ideal check list for all His devotees offering *neivedyam* to the Lord. And one should offer *thoppanam* and knock at his forehead (*kuttu*) while worshipping Ganesa, as the saint has narrated in one of his hymns. The saint's *Samarasa bhava* is evident in all his songs. For these reasons, *Thiruppugazh* readily appeals to individuals professing absolute faith in Ganapathi and *Gaanaapathya* cult. They find in these compositions sublime prayers of Ganapathi and other *puraanic* anecdotes relating to their favourite deity, conforming to their beliefs and conventions.

To Ganapathi, the very Lord who is venerated among all gods, His omnipotent Parents, Siva and Parvathi, meant the basic enlivening forces of the Universe. While singing the praises of Ganapathi, Arunagirinatha being aware of this supreme truth, remembers Lord Siva with a deep sense of adoration. This forms the theme of the next chapter.

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Footnotes

1. *" Thwam Brahmaa Thwam Vishnusthvam Rudrasthvamindrasthvamagnisthvam Vaayusthvam Sooryasthvam Chandramaasthvam Brahmabhoorbhuvahaswarom."*
2. Also known as *Ganesh, Vinayaka, Vignahar, Prathamesh and Vigneswara.*
3. The mass worship of Ganapathi in Maharashtra can be partly attributed to Lokmanya Tilak, who during the freedom struggle used the public (*saarvajanik)* Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations as a medium for spreading patriotism among people. These celebrations take place even now with great éclat.
4. There are legends associated with these eight holy shrines. It was in *Morgaon* that Ganesa vanquished the wicked king *Sindhu* and rescued gods held in captivity by him. The Lord is believed to have killed *Gun*, the son of King *Abhijit* in *Theur; Gun* had forcefully removed the precious stone Chintamani from sage Kapila. Ganesa is said to have manifested in *Lenyadri* after Goddess Parvathi did penance for twelve years to beget a son like Ganesa. *Ozar* is the holy place where Ganapathi is believed to have killed King *Abhinandan* who aspired for immortality. The story goes that Siva paid reverence to Ganesa in *Ranjangaon*, thereby enabling Him to vanquish *Tripuram* (Three worlds). To fulfil the wish of His ardent

devotee, *Ballal*, Ganesa assumed the name of *Ballaleshwar* in *Pali*. The Lord responded to the severe penance observed by sage *Gruhatsamat* in *Mahad*. Lord Vishnu is said to have got enlightenment in *Siddhatek*.

5 There is a story behind Ganapathi taking mouse as His mount. *Gajamukhasura* tormented gods. Indra and other gods prayed at the feet of Ganapathi and appealed to Him to remove their woes. Responding to their prayers, Ganapathi fought valiantly against the demon. During this battle, the Lord took off one of his tusks and lashed at *Gajamukhasura*, which pierced his chest. Feigning death he left the demonic body and turned himself as a mouse. The demon in the rodent form attempted to confront the Lord. Ganapathi sat on it and commanded it to bear him and thus it became His mount.

6 *Appam* is a sweetened round-shaped mini cake of rice flour and jaggery usually fried in ghee.

7 *Karpagam*: A celestial tree, which fulfils the desires of aspirants.

8 *Iyal, Isai, Natakam* (Prose, Verse and Theatre).

9 'Bee-Pollute' - Honey

10 *Pittu* - A rice preparation.

11 Plantain, mango and jack-fruit.

12 *Murukku:* A flat, twisted, spiral, fried savoury, made of rice and black-gram flour.

13 The legend has it that Vishnu assumed the form of a mighty tortoise when the *manthara* mountain used as a rotating rod for churning the Ocean of Milk by gods and demons started to sink. Vishnu in the form of tortoise brought the mountain up, enabling *devas* to have the taste of nectar on completion of the churning. The giant creature which remained under the ocean began tormenting the Universe. On gods' appeal, Siva sent Ganapathi to tame the tortoise. The Lord used His trunk to syringe off the entire ocean. In this process, the troublesome tortoise too entered Ganesa's trunk. Ganapathi thereupon let off the water He had taken in His trunk. The tortoise hit the ground and got smashed. Ganapathi pierced it with His tusk and gave its outer shell to Siva, Who wore it on His chest.

14 *Thoppanam* or *Thoppukkaranam and kuttu* are exclusive forms of worship of Ganesa. In *thoppanam*, the devotee holds the lobe of his left ear with the raised right hand and that of his right ear with the raised left hand. He stands and sits (with only his feet touching the ground) before the deity this way, for a fixed number of times.

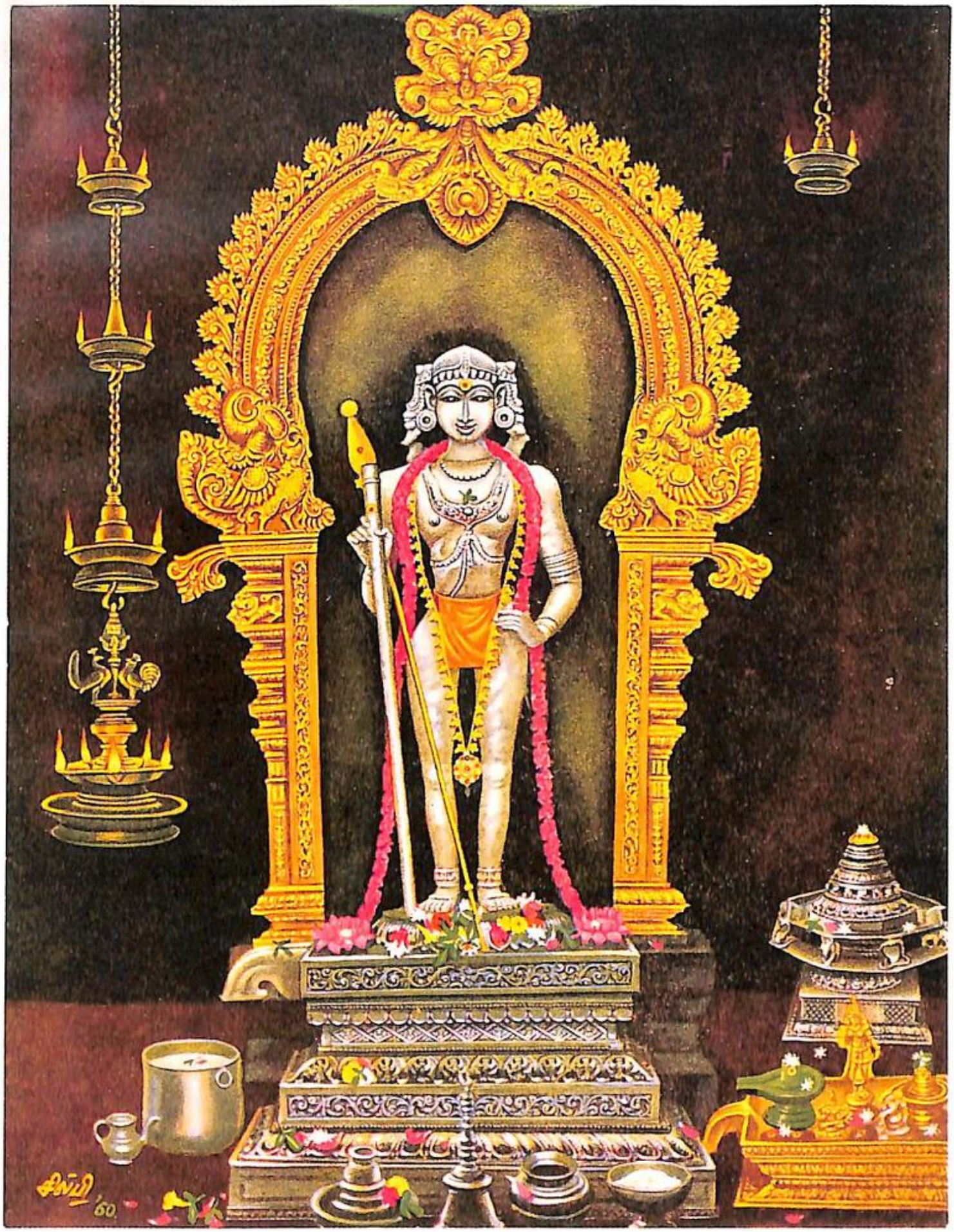
15 *'Kuttu'* is the gentle knocking at both the ends of the forehead with one's closed fists.

Both the forms of worship convey one's regret over past sins and misdeeds and seek Ganapathi's blessings for the righteous conduct and fulfillment of other desires.

16 See Footnote No. 11 above.

17 Apart from specific *Thiruppugazh* songs in praise of Muruga sung by Arunagirinatha in various shrines, he has also praised the glory of Lord in hymns which are not directly linked with any particular holy place; these come under "common hymns."

18 The story goes that while Raavana was returning to Sri Lanka with *Siva Linga*, which he had obtained from Lord Siva, with intention to install it in Lanka, Ganapathi appeared in the form of a Brahmin lad. Raavana asked the "Lad' to hold the *Sivalinga* for a while saying that he would return shortly. He told Ganesa not to keep the *Sivalinga* down. But Ganapathi kept it on the earth before Raavana returned. Raavana's efforts to lift the idol were in vain; it became elastic as cow's ears. The place where this incident occurred is 'Gokarnam' and *Sivalingam* is 'Mahaa Bala Lingam'.



Palani (Tiruvaavinankudi)

CHAPTER 6

SAIVISM AND ARUNAGIRINATHA

"Venom is Thy food, serpent Thy ornament,
The elephant hide Thy garb,
And a giant bull (Thy) mount;
Oh, Sambho! what then wouldst Thou give me?
Bestow unto me only the devotion to Thy lotus Feet."[1]

- Sivananda Lahiri (Stanza 87) (Adi Sankara)

If one scans through *Thiruppugazh* songs intently and with an inquiring mind, he would not fail to perceive a consistently overriding influence of Lord Siva[2] on Arunagirinatha. He would in fact get an impression that the saint does not really make any distinction between Siva and His divine Offspring Muruga. Arunagirinatha, deep into his heart, ever remembers that Muruga, though presents Himself in a different physical state, is an integral part of Siva. Muruga, as stated in Chapter 1, manifested in this Universe emerging out of the powerful third eye of Siva, Who out of compassion towards the celestial beings, willed that the Supreme Power that was emerging from Him would annihilate the demon race and restore freedom to gods in distress. That the saint regards Siva and Muruga as a single divine personality is evident from many of his compositions, a few of which are given below.

i) "Should I, without chanting "Hara Hara Sivaaya" on every day and without understanding the truth of six Samayaas (cults), perish shamelessly, standing day after day in front of houses which offer me food!"

- "Karuvin Uruvagi" (Pazhani Thiruppugazh)

ii) Muruga is addressed as *"Leader who burnt Tripuram" (Three worlds)* and the saint worships Muruga saying : *"Siva Siva Hara Hara Devaa Namo Namah" in* Chidambaram *Thiruppugazh "Avaguna Virahanai...."*

iii) "(Muruga) is the one who is the Basic Substance of Five Syllables "NAMASIVAYA"".

- 'Bhumiyathanil' (Kailaimalai Thiruppugazh).

iv) In Swamimalai *Thiruppugazh "Avaamaru"*, Arunagirinatha deprecates himself as one who is *"the source of darkness" (to mean that he is fully ignorant) and "who never recalled the holy name of Sivaaya"* and requests Muruga to call him and bestow His blessings.

The divine Five Syllables, *NAMASIVAYA*, known as *Panchaakshara* is a highly efficacious *mantra*, relating to Siva, which is capable of giving salvation *(mukti)*. This *mantra*, together with Sacred Ash *(Vibhoothi)* has been the solid support behind many-a-saivite savant.[3] Arunagirinatha who is fully conscious of the potency of *Panchaakshara* and the greatness of *Thiruvannamalai*, where the Lord Arunachaleswara (Siva) resides majestically, has devoted almost a full *Thiruppugazh* verse beginning *"Jaya Jaya Arunatthiri"*[4] glorifying both. In this hymn too the saint sees Siva and Muruga as One Single Supreme God. The chanting of the transpositive version of the five syllables of *NAMASIVAYA*, viz., *SIVAYANAMA, MASIVAYANA, NAMASIVAYA, YANAMASIVA, VAYANAMASI* and *SIVAYA NAMASTHU*, as given in this hymn, coupled with remembrance of Arunadri (the saint has repeated this name several times in this verse) are the sure means of emancipation. It is remarkable that in the stanza where he underscores the greatness of Arunadri (which is synonymous with Siva) the concluding phrases are by way of paying obeisance to Muruga, *"who slew the demons taking shelter behind the mountains of Krowncham* and *Ezhugiri."*

The first four lines of the short *Thiruppugazh* hymn *"Sikaram Arundha"* (Mayapuri) contain Arunagirinatha's exposition of the greatness of two syllables of the powerful *Panchaakshara*, viz., *Si* and *Ma*. Chanting of *'Si'*, says he, brings forth *Siva Jnana* (Realisation of Siva) and action and desires (arising out of mind, word of mouth and body) are shattered into pieces; by pronouncing *"Ma"*, *mahamaayai* (the great delusion) is destroyed.

In the *Thiruppugazh* hymn *"Madhiya Mamguna"* sung at Chidambaram, the saint explains the relationship of *Panchaak-*

shara and the Five Elements and yearns to merge into Siva in the form of *Linga:*

"*Prithvi* (Earth) which seeks the support of Moon has five *gunaas* (characteristics)[5] and (that the Earthern Region) is quadrangular in shape. It contains *'Na'* of *Panchaakshara* in itself and *Nivritti* which is the first of the *Panchakalaas* (The Five Arts)[6];

"Ganga (*'App'* - water: Watery Region) has four *gunaas*[7]; this denotes *'Ma'* of Panchaakshara;

"*Agni* (Fire : Fiery Region) which is located in front of Watery Region signifies *'Si'* of *Panchaakshara;* this Region has triple qualities[8] and is triangular.

"The *Chandamaarutham* (storm - *vaayu* - Airy Region) which possesses the capacity to burn (things) has two characteristics[9] and is a brilliant hexagon. It denotes *'Va'* in *Panchaakshara.*

"The widely spread *Aakasa* (Ether - Etherish Region) which signifies *'Ya'* in *Panchaakshara* has one matchless characteristic,[10] is a massive globe comprising Sun and Moon and hence circular in shape.

"Two are the horses (*Idai Kalai* and *Pingalai)* which gallop fast to reach the crest of the glowing Mass through twin routes (*Rechakam* and *Poorakam).* (Taming them) and experiencing the (divine) *Jyoti* of Grace by vanquishing of *indriyaas* (sensory organs), when shall I merge unto *Bindhu Naadha* (Lingaakaara Siva) with the power of *mantras* which would gladden the Deities of Solar and Lunar (and Agni - Fire) Regions!".

It is thus evident that in Arunagirinatha's perception, Siva and Muruga were not separate divine manifestations. He saw Siva in Muruga and Muruga in Siva. For him they were the two forms of *Parabrahma.* The question may then arise why did he sing the glory of Siva in exclusion. The answer is not too far to seek. The saint was known to be balanced in his attitude and approach towards cults professing different faiths. He was quite at ease with *Saivism* as with *Gaanaapathyam,* described in the previous chapter, or his own apparent choice *Kaumara.* The saint shows us the way how to

be tolerant to those who venerate different dieties. In author's opinion, Arunagirinatha perhaps got an abundant degree of satisfaction and happiness by singing again and again the glory of Lord Siva, as distinct from his favourite deity Muruga, primarily because of the divine emergence of the latter from Siva. He repeatedly addresses Muruga as the Offspring of Siva, as the One who preached the *Pranava* to His Father, and the One who took round of the Universe to get the prize fruit from His Father. The saint's unique technique, as already mentioned, is that he will first offer his worshipful praise on Siva, portray vividly His majestic physical form, recount epical anecdotes which focus on the Lord's *leelas* and heroic acts and finally link Siva and Muruga by referring to their holy Father-Son relationship.

Arunagirinatha brings before us the handsome features of Siva, when he says :

"(Siva) Who wears matted locks, holds venom (in His neck), wears (the garland of) serpents, wields the majestic Parasu (mazhu), adorns Crescent (on His Head), embodies purity, holds damaruka producing different sounds, holds animal (stag), carries Agni (Fire) in His hand, wears around the neck (the garland of) human skeletons, possesses the Bow (Meru mountain) which bears the Earth, and Who bears (on His tuft) the unique Ganga (river) branching off in different directions.[11]

Arunagirinatha in one of his hymns reminds us of the occasion when the heavenly subjects and their sworn enemies, *asuraas* (demons) started churning of the Ocean of Milk. While this process was on, a dark deadly venom called *'Aalalhaala'* suddenly emerging out of the ocean encircled the atmosphere threatening the safety of the very Universe. In the words of Arunagirinatha, *"distressed (at this development), Indra and gods present there called out (at Siva as) "Hara Haraa, Siva Sankara, Sankara!" and Siva devoured the venom that sprang forth."* [12] Noticing Her Husband's unusual act, Parvathi[13] quickly gripped the Lord's neck firmly so as to prevent the dangerous material from getting inside His body. Lo! the blue-coloured venom remained permanently in Siva's neck, yielding Him the name *Neelakanta* (Blue-throated Lord).

The story goes that while gods wanted desperately a powerful divine personality who would put an end to the atrocities of Soorapadma and his kinsmen, and were certain that Siva alone could help them to remove their woes, the Lord of their hearts was in deep meditation in Kailas. At the same time Parvathi, the daughter of Himavaan, the king of mountains, was performing a penance in its severest form to have Siva as Her Husband with Her heart solely fixed on Siva[14]. With no end in sight for termination of their hardships, gods thoughts of a plan for bringing together Siva and Parvathi. They despatched Manmatha, the god of love, to the place where Siva was in meditation.

Now let us hear Arunagirinatha. In his *Thirutthani Thiruppugazh "Iruppaval"* the saint reminiscences the above occurrence and tells us about Siva and what He did at that time. *" (Siva) who in a moment's time burnt, with the third eye on His forehead, robust Manmatha, who with his natural grace hid himself and sent (five) flowery arrows from his sugarcane-bow (on the Lord)."* The saint goes on further to describe the Lord as One *"Who resides in mountain"* (Kailas) and One *"Who gave one portion to Uma* [15]*, who had been brought up in Himalayas."*

In Aykudi *Thiruppugazh "Vaatpada"*, Arunagirinatha recalls the sacred story of *Maarkkandeya,* who is regarded as one of the immortal beings (*Chiranjeevi).* At the time of birth itself *Maarkkandeya* was foretold that he was destined to live for only sixteen years. On completion of sixteen years, Yama appeared on the appointed day to take *Maarkkandeya's* life. He attempted to drag his victim towards him throwing his powerful *paasa,* taking no cognizance of *Maarkkandeya's* Siva *pooja* then going on. The ardent devotee prayed to Siva. See the graphical manner of Arunagirinatha's narration :

"(Siva) who kicked off with His long (holy) Feet (that) fierce-looking Yama, who like a hissing, deadly cobra angered at being trampled over was following the young lad (Maarkkandeya) saying (I won't leave you!)."

This anecdote shows that Siva's grace can even change one's destiny. And Siva was eminently qualified to reprimand the Lord of Death as He Himself looks after *laya* or *Samhara*

of all the animate objects of the Universe, among the triple eternal functions of *Srishti* (creation), *Sthithi* (preservation) and *laya* or *Samhara* (destruction) [16]. He would not tolerate infliction of injury on, or harassment of His devotees, and Yama was no exception[17].

Arunagirinatha's capacity to recall the interesting anecdotes concerning Siva in his hymns is indeed unlimited. The imperious Raavana once during the course of his *digvijaya* (victory tour) happened to notice that Mount Kailasa, the holy abode of Siva, was obstructing the path of his flying vehicle *Pushpaka*. He got down from his vehicle and attempted to lift the Kailasa nonchalantly, with the object to re-locate it in a different place. Annoyed at Raavana's indiscreet action, the Lord of Kailasa, pressed the mountain with the tip of a finger-nail of His leg. This inflicted a great pain to the demon king and in desperation he began to sing the glory of Siva with all sincerity repenting over his folly. Pleased at his prayers, Siva released Raavana from his agony.[18] Arunagirinatha is reminded of this happening when he worships Muruga at Chidambaram, where the presiding Lord Siva is depicted in Cosmic Dancing posture (*Nataraja*). The saint addresses Muruga as *"the Basic Substance of the Five syllables "SIVAYANAMA"* and the son of *"HARA SAMBHU" (Siva), the possessor of Graceful Feet, who made Raavana's body fall to the ground when he tilted the mountain (Kailasa) violently and took it on his shoulders."*[19]

A brilliant portrayal of Lord Siva and His heroic deeds is found in one of Arunagirinatha's 'common' *Thiruppugazh* songs : *"Naraiyodu Parkkazhaandru"*. In this song, the saint describes Siva as one who -

"— preached the glorious syllables *(Panchaakshara)* to the Threesome who knew the content and the word, in order to enhance their fame;

— embodies the green-complexioned Goddess on His one side;

— went around the world accepting *Bhiksha* that was made available;

— stabilised the Universe by consuming the venom which emerged out of the ocean;

— burnt *Tripurams* which possessed the faculty to fly around;

— ties serpent around the hip beautifully in a fitting manner;

— places the Crescent aesthetically on the glowing matted locks in harmony with the *Ganga* residing thereat;

— wears *Arugu, Nocchi* and *Thumbai* on His Body, along with the serpent; and

— is worshipped by Vishnu and Brahma during their daily visits."

One of the easier ways to win the grace of Lord is to seek the company of His devotees (*Satsang*) and to remember them with veneration. The God is pleased with those who respect His chosen devotees. Arunagirinatha, conscious of this fact, remembers the three great saivite saints in his laudations. These saints are Thiru Jnana Sambhandhar, Sundaramoorthy Swamigal and Maanikkavaachaga Swamigal. Together with Thirunaavukkarasu Swamigal (Appar), they constitute the four pillars of the saiva cult edifice. Arunagirinatha regarded Thiru Jnanasambhandar as the re-incarnation of Muruga. In Pazhani *Thiruppugazh "Karuvin Uruvagi"*, he addresses Muruga as *'One Who on that day appeared in Pugaliyur'* - an obvious reference to Thiru Jnanasambhandar, born in Sirkaazhi, also known as Pugaliyur. In another hymn, *"Neittha Churi Kuzhal"*, sung at Vayalur, he equates Sambhandhar and Muruga when he addresses him as *"Uma's Son"* and *"the handsome (individual) who lived in Sirkaazhi, also known as Piramaapuram"*. The saint sings the glory of Sambhandhar in Stanza 29 of *Kandhar Andhadhi* too, where he categorically declares that Sambhandhar is none other than Muruga.

Sundaramoorthy Swamigal, who had the rare privilege of engaging himself in service of Siva in Mount Kailasa was forced to take birth on the earth, as ordained by the Lord. His fault was that he set his eyes lovingly on two celestial helpmaids of Goddess Parvathi, namely Kamalini and Anindhidhai. The women too were equally enchanted with Aalaala

Sundara as he was then known. At the request of his devotee, Siva assured that He would resuscitate him at the appropriate time.

In fulfilment of the assurance, Siva appeared just at the time when Nambiaarooran (Sundaramoorthy Swamigal's original name) was about to get married. Arunagirinatha in a *Thiruppugazh* song brings before us the picture of Lord Siva, Who had assumed the form of a grand old man advancing to the entrance of the marriage hall hurriedly when the young Sundara was about to wed. The aged Brahmin flashes before the men and women assembled there an old tattered and folded palmyra leaf inscription which reads : "For the entire world to know - This boy is my slave !". The youngster snatches away the leaf wilfully from the old man and tears it off. The old man, shaking his limbs violently, shouts: *"Is it fair (to tear the document) ?"*[20].

What followed was the 'old man's' startling revelation that the original testimony was still intact in Thiruvennainalloor and what was destroyed was only a duplicate. They all proceeded to Thiruvennainalloor. The vedic scholars who acted as jurors to the dispute whether Nambiaarooran was the slave of the 'old man', were convinced of the latter's claim when the original testimony was produced before them. They decreed that Nambiaarooran was indeed the slave of the 'old man'. Nambiaarooran later came to know that the 'old man' was none other than Lord Siva, when He appeared before him with His divine Consort Parvathi, mounted on the Bull. The Lord commanded Nambiaarooran to sing His glory in Tamil. Sundaramoorthy Swamigal's maiden *Thevaram* hymn which started with the word *'Pitthaa'* (one who raves) was initiated by Siva Himself; that was how the saint had earlier called Him pooh-poohing His claim that he was His slave.[21]

Later Nambiaarooran married Paravaiyar and Changiliyar, who were Kamalini and Anindhidhai in their ethereal lives. It is said that Paravaiyar, on learning Her Husband's marrying Changiliyar declined to stay with him. Arunagirinatha says: *"Pleased with Sundarar's hymns, Siva went by foot to mediate".*[22] And there was *rapprochement.*

The king of Chera Region, Cheramaan Perumal was a friend of Sundaramoorthy Swamigal. When the time for Sundaramoorthy Swamigal's re-entry into Kailasa arrived, Siva sent the White Elephant along with *devaas* to fetch Swamigal. When Cheramaan Perumal heard this, he mounted on a horse, whispered *Panchaakshara* into its ears and reached Kailasa. Arunagirinatha has referred to the King's friendship with 'Aaroorar' (Sundaramoorthy Swamigal), his leaving for Kailasa mounted on horse and his singing hymn impromptu[23] in *Thiruppugazh* hymn *'Naadha Bindhu Kalaadhi'* (Thiruvavinankudi). Paravaiyar and Changiliyar too assumed their original forms as Kamalini and Anindhidhai and reached Kailasa.

Arunagirinatha remembers Maanikkavaachaga Swamigal, the composer of honey-sweet *Thiruvaachakam* in his hymns. In *"Seetha Vaasanai"* sung in Madurai[24], the saint portrays Siva as *"Pittha*[25] *who, shone as a Gurumoorthy to Maanikkavaachaga born at Thiruvaathavoor and preached the path of jnana to him and Who cheered Himself at His holy leela which made the skulk of foxes into horses, Who accepted the golden shawl presented by Paandyan out of love, and Who danced and carried sand at the banks of Vaigai river and ate 'Pittu' offered by (the old woman) Vandhi who had the 'Pittu' business"*.

In the above narration, Saint Arunagirinatha reminds us of the occasion when Lord Siva, to protect His disciple Maanikkavaachagar, who had spent the Exchequer's money for spiritual causes, produced horses which were in fact foxes. When they became foxes again overnight, the king began to torment Maanikkavaachagar, which prompted Siva to create floods in Vaigai river. And the surging flood waters entered the town. The king ordered citizens of the town to come forward and block the leakage. An old lady named Vandhi who earned her livelihood by preparing and selling *Pittu* did not have anyone who could volunteer to do the filling job. Siva in the form of a labourer carried the sand on her behalf and all that He asked for and got for this work was *Pittu* made by the old woman.

It is truly said *"Anbe' Sivam"* (Siva is Love). The Lord is pleased with those who display uninhibited love and stead-

fast devotion towards Him, regardless of what he offers to Him while worshipping Him. The caste, colour or creed of the devotee is also not of any relevance[26]. Kannappa Naayanar, belonging to the hunter tribe is a shining example of such an ardent devotee who obtained the grace of Siva.

The hunter-devotee, Thinnanaar (as he was then known) worshipped the idol of *Sivalinga* by showering it water which he had filled in his mouth, offering pork as the *neivedyam* (holy food) and doing *archana* with flowers which he had placed in his tuft. Yet the Lord accepted these happily and asked the learned priest, Sivagopachariyar, who usually performed the *pujas*, to see for himself Thinnanaar's devotion next day, by hiding himself.

When Thinnanaar came to worship Siva, he was shocked to notice blood oozing from one of the eyes of the idol. He squeezed some herbs and applied the essence to stop the flow of blood, but in vain. He at once plucked one of his eyes with the aid of his arrow and stuck it on the idol. The blood stopped and Thinnanaar began dancing rejoicingly. But his joy was short-lived for he saw the blood oozing from the other eye of *Sivalinga*. With determination to offer his remaining eye too to the Lord, Thinnanaar, placed his left leg on the idol's holy eye, lest he should miss the exact spot when his both eyes were taken out, and was set to execute his plan. Just then, Siva emerged out of the *Sivalinga* and called out, "Stop, Kannappa!". Kannappa attained immortality, to the joy and surprise of Sivagopachariyar witnessing the devotee's innocent and daring acts, out of extreme devotion.

Arunagirinatha has condensed the sacred story of Kannappa Naayanaar in just four scintillating lines in Chidambaram *Thiruppugazh "Maccha Mecchu..."*[27].

From what has been discussed in the foregoing paragraphs, it would be evident that Arunagirinatha's mental outlook and stance towards *Saivism* and Siva in his *Thiruppugazh* psalms go in harmony with the tenets enshrined in *Saiva Samaya Siddhantha* (the philosophy of saivite cult). The saint endorses the noble path of devotion adopted by great saivite saints who sang the glory of Siva and chanted the powerful *Panchaakshara mantra*, as revealed by his frequent references to

the lives of Thiru Jnana Sambhandhar, Sundaramoorthy Swamigal and Mannikkavaachaga Swamigal in his verses. The apostle knew that the way for spiritual elevation and god-realisation shown by these liberated souls was the true and ideal one - the way leading to the exalted position of *"Siva Swaroopa maha yogi."* That was the status he sought from his favourite deity through his fervent supplications.

We shall see in the next chapter that the benevolent and all-powerful Siva derives energy for His functioning from Shakti, His divine Consort.

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Footnotes

1. *"Asanam Garalam Phani Kalaapo*
   Vasanam Charma cha Vaahanam Mahokshah
   Mama Daasyasi Kim Kimasthi Sambho
   Thava Paadaambuja Bhaktimeva Dehi."
2. Siva : Also known as *Sankara, Neelakanta, Mahaadeva.*
3. *Sundaramoorthy Swamigal,* one of the Holy Trio who sang *Thevaaram* on Siva says :
   "I've only your Holy Feet fix'd in my mind
   Cleansed of all other attachments,
   Not only hath I benefited by taking birth (in this world),
   But attained hath I the status of being not born again henceforth,
   Oh! the sublime Lord of **Paandikkodumudi**
   Who is venerated by wise men in **Thirukkaraiyoor,**
   If ever it happens that I forget you,
   (My) tongue will (still) pronounce "Namasivaaya"
   —Namasivaya Padhigam.
4. *Arunatthiri* (Tamil) - *Arunaadri* (Sanskrit)- Aruna Hill (Thiruvannamalai or Thiruvarunai).
5. Sound, touch, light, taste and smell
6. *Nivritti, Prathishta, Vidya, Shanthi, Saadhyathoetha* - These are the *Panchakalaas.*
7. Sound, touch, shape (colour) and taste
8. Sound, touch ,shape (colour)
9. Sound and touch
10. Sound
11. *"Kodiya Maraliyum...."* - Thiruchengodu *Thiruppugazh.* This narration is loaded with a number of Sanskrit terms proclaiming Arunagirinatha's mastery over Sanskrit.

12. *"Alaga Bhaaram Aalaindhu.... "* - Thiruchendur *Thiruppugazh.*
13. Also known as *Uma, Gouri, Bhavaani.*
14. It is said that Paarvathi did not even eat any leaves during the penance. Hence the name *'Aparna'.*
15. Since Siva has given a portion (left side) of His body to Uma (Parvathi). He is known as *"Ardhanareeswara"* (Semi-Female Lord). There is a legend behind this. Sage Bringi circumambulated only Siva, excluding Parvathi. Noticing this, the Goddess sat in close proximity to the Lord. Thereupon the sage took the form of a wasp (*Bringam*) and passed between the Two. The Goddess enquired why the sage was avoiding Her. The Lord replied that those who wish to get their desires fulfilled worship Her and those who aspire for salvation pray to Him. Parvathi on hearing this explanation, did penance at the place known as Kedaaram and secured the left portion of the Lord Himself for Her.
16. *Srishti* and *Sthithi* are attended to by Brahma and Vishnu.
17. Thirunaavukkarasu Swamigal (*Appar*), a contemporary of Thiru Jnana Sambandhar and one of the three saints who sang *Thevaram,* thunders boldly: *"We are not subjects of anyone, we won't dread Naman (Yama), nor would we suffer tortures in the hell."*
    Adi Sankaracharya in his *"Sivananda Lahiri"* says : *"Oh, the Husband of Bhavaani! Whosoever worships Your lotus Feet - from him the Lord of Death flees apprehending another kick at the chest!"* (Stanza : 65).
18. Those who visit Suchindrum (near Kanyakumari) in South India during the two 10-day Festivals of the local famous Siva temple, one in the Tamil Month of *Marghazhi* (December-January) and another in *Chitthirai* (April-May) would be thrilled to see Siva and Parvathi coming majestically in a grand procession around the main streets of the village on the Seventh day night, seated on the silver *kailasa* mount *(Vaahana).* The *vaahana* has Raavana at its front side, with his ten heads and twenty arms, holding a veena in his hand; he is apparently singing the glory of the Lord Who saved him from near collapse.
19. *"Eluppu Thol Mayir....."* -Thiruppugazh.
20. *"Irul alaga..."* - Thiruvarunai Thiruppugazh.
21. Readers will notice a similarity between Sundaramoorthy Swamigal's initiation into the holy mission of singing Lord's glory and that of Arunagirinatha's. The opening words of maiden hymns of both the saints were supplied by their favourite deities.
22. *"Kondhala Olai..."* - Ilanji *Thiruppugazh.*
23. It is believed that Cheramaan Perumal sang *Thiru Kailaaya Jnana Ula* while he was at the entrance of Kailasa, waiting for his friend Sundaramoorthy Swamigal's arrival.
24. This is an apt co-incidence that Arunagirinatha remembers Maanikkavaachagar and *leelas* of Siva that are connected with Maanikkavaachagar in Madurai, a town where the divine drama took place.

25. The allusion here is to the appellation used by Sundaramoorthy Swamigal (See page 58).

26. Lord Krishna says : "If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, I will accept it."
- Bhagavad Gita. Chapter 9, (Raja Vidya Raja Guhya Yoga) Stanza 26.

27. Readers will find a comparison of Kannappa Naayanaar in *Sabari*, the old woman who offered fruits devoutly to Lord Rama, after tasting each of them; Rama gladly accepted what His devotee offered.

CHAPTER 7

SHAAKTAM AND ARUNAGIRINATHA

"We prostrate before Thee, Naaraayanee!
Who is encircled by the Peacock and the Cock,
Who holds the mighty spear (Vel)
And is faultless,
And Who hath assumed the Form of Kowmaaree." [1]

- Devi Maahatmyam,
(Chapter 11, Stanza 15)

Adi Sankaracharya on commencement of his magnificent *'Soundarya Lahiri'*, a devotional outpouring at Goddess Parvathi or Shakti, glorifies the gracious combination of Siva and Shakti and says that if Siva does not manifest Himself along with Shakti, He wouldn't be able even to stir from where He is situated. Shakti is the Driving Force of all animate objects in this Universe. The Lotus Feet of the Universal Mother is worshipped by "Hari Hara Brahma" (Vishnu, Siva and Brahma). In stanza 28 of the same Hymns, the seer-poet extols the glory of the Goddess's ear-rings and says that when Brahma, Indra and other gods meet with their disaster at the time of the great deluge (*Pralaya*) despite their having tasted nectar, nothing happened to Siva though he took the deadly poison, thanks to the prepotency of the Goddess's ear-rings.

Thus it is difficult to comprehend Siva as a distinct entity separate from Shakti. It was mentioned in the previous chapter that Parvathi occupies the left portion of Siva's Body and thus She is an integral part of the Lord[2]. The Goddess is all-pervasive[3] and ever compassionate to Her devotees, as a mother is towards her children. *Lalita Sahasranamam* describes Her as *"Aabrahma Keeta Janani"* - She is the creator of everything in this Universe. *"Devi Maahatmyam"* which is incorporated in *Maarkkandeya Puranam* contains 700 *mantras* (hence known as *"Saptha Sathi"*) in worshipful praise of the Goddess

and one of the divine Forms assumed by the Goddess, as mentioned in this holy scripture is *Kowmaaree*, whose descriptions are akin to those of Muruga. According to *Srimad Bhaagavatham*, Sri Lakshmi, the divine Spouse of Vishnu, who had incarnated as Rugmini feared that Raavana had come in the form of Sisupalan (who was to wed Rugmini as planned by Her brother Rugmi). She prayed at the Holy Feet of Shakti (Parvathi), the Family Deity, to remove her fears and sought the blessings of the Goddess for Her marrying Sree Krishna. Her prayers were promptly fulfilled. And in the same epic, we find mention of the pretty womenfolk of the cowherds' colony (where Lord Krishna grew as the son of Nandagopa), offering prayers to Goddess Kaathyayani (Parvathi) for Lord Krishna to become their Husband.

Among the Tamil literary masterpieces on the Goddess, *Abhirami Andhadhi* and *Abhirami Pathigam* sung by Abhirami Bhattar are remarkable for their poetic excellence and devotional content[4]. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, the most distinguished devotee of *Kaali* (Parashakti) was in direct communion with the Goddess.

In Chapter 1, it was mentioned that Goddess Parvathi presented the powerful *'Vel'* (Spear) to Muruga and wished Her brave Offspring victory over Soorapadma. The 'Shakti Vel' presented by 'Shakti' Herself pierced through the monster's body and made it into two halves. The courage and valour of the Divine Mother who slew the mighty *Mahishaasura* replicated in an abundant measure in Her Son Muruga who fought a whole army of *asuras* led by Soorapadma and annihilated them to the gods' rejoicing[5].

Arunagirinatha remembers the Divine Mother in veneration in several of his *Thiruppugazh* verses when he prays at the holy Feet of Muruga. The saint quite often describes certain characteristics or *leelas* of Lord Siva as those of Parvathi in *Thiruppugazh* hymns; in effect he perceives a Siva-Shakti manifestation in these instances. In a *Thiruppugazh* hymn of Thiruchendoor, *"Moolum Vinai"*, Parvathi is referred to as One *"Who consumed the dark venom"*, whereas it was Siva who did so on the occasion of churning the Ocean of Milk[6]". In the same song, the saint calls Her as *"Durga who kicked off to the*

ground Kaala (Yama) who came (to take the life of Maarkkandeya) at the termination of set period according to planetary position[7]. Though it was Siva who did this act, it was the Goddess's leg that actually kicked off the Lord of Death, since Parvathi has occupied the left portion of Siva's Body[8].

The portrayals of Parvathi as One "*Who bent Meru mountain and burnt Tripuram*" and "*Who has a throat which contains the deadly venom*[9]" and One "*Who sports matted locks*[10]" - all relate directly to the venerable Spouse of Devi; the fact that Arunagirinatha attributes these to Shakti amply proves that they are organically fused together. Indeed the Universe exists because of this Holy Union.

Arunagirinatha presents a fine portrait of Parvathi in his *Thiruppugazh* psalm *"Kombanaiyar"* sung at Thiruchendoor. This goes thus :

"Sankari who danced
Like a whirling top[11],
Chief of Vethaalas;
Anklets she wears
On the Lotus Feet
That are propitious;
Holds Sula in Her Hand,
Faultless, dark-complexioned
Durga, who strikes terror
Mahakaali, Yogini;
Once when (She) found
That Thou (Muruga) art to
Combat the inebriated Soora,
Presented Vel
That prophesied victory (unto Thee),
As if to say,
"Hail, hail (Thee) my Son!"

Arunagirinatha derives extreme pleasure in addressing Muruga as the Offspring of Goddess Parvathi. In doing so he uses different appellations of the Divine Mother. It is amazing to notice that the saint has an endless repertoire of Holy Names of Shakti, both in Tamil and Sanskrit. The author thought it appropriate to cull 108 of such appellations found in various *Thiruppugazh* hymns. This will as well serve as an *Ashtothara Satha Namaavali* of Goddess. These Holy Names follow (arranged alphabetically) :

1. *Aala Bhojani*
2. *Aaru Samaiyatthi*
3. *Abhinavai*
4. *Abhirami*
5. *Adi Shakti*
6. *Amalai*
7. *Ambai*
8. *Ambigai*
9. *Anagai*
10. *Andhari*
11. *Anubhavai*
12. *Anudhayai*
13. *Bhagavati*
14. *Bhairavi*
15. *Bhavani*
16. *Bhayankari*
17. *Chamundi*
18. *Chandikai*
19. *Chandrasekhari*
20. *Devi*
21. *Dighambari*
22. *Durgai*
23. *Gayatri*
24. *Girikumari*
25. *Gowri*
26. *Gunadhari*
27. *Imagiri Kumaaratthi*
28. *Jnanapoorani*
29. *Kaadugaal*
30. *Kaalakhandi*
31. *Kaali*
32. *Kaarani*
33. *Kalyani*
34. *Kapaali*
35. *Komalai*
36. *Kumari*
37. *Kundali*
38. *Lokaa Loki*
39. *Maalini*
40. *Maari*
41. *Mahamaayi*
42. *Maheswari*

43. Makara Kundali
44. Malaikumari
45. Malaimagal
46. Mangalai
47. Manomani
48. Manthra Sabhashaa Bhaashini
49. Maragatha Vadivi
50. Matha Maadhavi
51. Maathangi
52. Naarani
53. Naga bhooshanatthi
54. Namohari
55. Neela Sundari
56. Neeli
57. Nimali
58. Niranjini
59. Nishkali
60. Parvathi
61. Panchavi
62. Parabrahmi
63. Parai yogi
64. Paramakalyani
65. Parameswari
66. Parashakti
67. Paripura Natani
68. Peria Naayagi
69. Pingalai
70. Poorani
71. Rudri
72. Saamadevi
73. Saambhavi
74. Sakala kaarani
75. Samaya Nayagi
76. Sankari
77. Sarveswari
78. Seela Seelitri
79. Shakti
80. Sivai
81. Sivakama Sundari
82. Sivakami
83. Sivapatthini
84. Sooli
85. Sooraari
86. Sundari
87. Tharuni
88. Thrinayani
89. Thiru Saraswati
90. Thriambagai
91. Thribhuvani
92. Thripurai
93. Thrisooli
94. Uma
95. Vaachaama Gocharaa
96. Vaalai
97. Vaani

98. *Vaaraahi*
99. *Vanchi*
100. *Veda Nayagi*
101. *Veda Vidakshini*
102. *Veda Vitthagi*
103. *Vethaala Nayagi*
104. *Vibhanji*
105. *Vimali*
106. *Viraagini*
107. *Yaamali*
108. *Yogini*

Each of the above *naamas* is a highly powerful *mantra* and is pregnant with meaning and substance. They convey Arunagirinatha's perception of the omnipotent, omniscient Parashakti, Who creates, cares and causes cessation of this Universe. She represents the six cults, *(Gaanapathyam, Saivam, Shaaktam, Vaishnavism, Kaumaram* and *Sowryam)* - *"Aaru Samayatthi"* and *"Samaya Nayagi" as the saint portrays.* She is *Veda Nayagi,* leader of four *vedas* which proclaim Her glory. The Goddess is ever youthful (*'Tharuni', 'Kumari', 'Vaalai'*). She is tendril-like (*'Vanchi'*), beautiful (*'Abhirami', 'Maragatha Vadivi', Sundari),* three-eyed (*'Thrinayani'*) and One who transcends vocal or visual descriptions (*'Vaachaama Gochara'*).

Some of the other Holy Names of Shakti contained in *Thiruppugazh* hymns are equally magnificent and they bring before us the dazzling divine form of the Goddess, apart from proclaiming the adeptness of Arunagirinatha in his choice of words. When he calls out at Parvathi as *'Karunai Vizhi Karpagam'*, we envisage the Goddess Whose eyes shed compassion and Who is ever willing to fulfil the aspirations of Her devotees.[12] She is *"Kadia Vidatthai Podhindha Kandhari"* (One Whose throat contains the deadly venom) and *'Ambuya Maalai Bhooshani'* (One Who wears the garland of lotus flowers). On another occasion, the saint refers to Her as *"Sakala Bhuvanamum Udhaviya Pathivrathai'* [The virtuous Spouse (of Siva) Who created the whole Universe]. The lyrical beauty in the Goddess's appellation *"Tharuna Satha Dhala Parimala Paripura Sarani"*, (One whose Feet are ever-youthful, lotus-like, fragrant and are adorned with anklets) is marvellous.

The saint commences his *"Bhootha Vethala Vaguppu"* with reverential prayers to the Goddess; twenty Holy Names find

a place in the beginning of this composition. In *Thiruvelaikkaran Vaguppu,* Arunagirinatha refers to Muruga as One Who addresses Parvathi, *Who is green-complexioned (Shyamala complexion) and fragrant and Who resembles a beautiful koel, as "Mother".*

The prayers contained in *'Devendra Sangha Vaguppu'* are noted for their beauty and grandeur and one would rarely come across such Devi hymns in other Tamil texts. In this magnificent literary creation, Arunagirinatha describes the Goddess, among others, as One Who *"slew Hiranya, holds human skeleton, dances, shines in vedhaantha, wears bangles, has flowing tresses, has complexion resembling fire, has propitious and delicate Feet, slew demons, is peacock-like, has threadlike waist, shields me (devotees) from the dreaded messengers of Lord of Death, gives alms to those who beg for it, bestows bliss on the silent Jnaanis who fix their minds on the Goddess's Feet, puts an end to human sufferings, wears serpents and protects the Seven Worlds and the Seven Seas out of compassion.*[13]

Vel Vaangu Vaguppu is yet another composition by Arunagirinatha, where we find a magnificent array of significant appellations[14] of Goddess, "Ambigai", who is *"Inexplicable, Matchless, Unwavering, Unblemished, Untarnished, Embellished, Three-eyed, Stag-eyed, Exceedingly beautiful and Superior to Sri Lakshmi".* The Goddess, *"sensitizes everything"* (in the world) and is *"the Seed (origin) of Jnana"* and *resides in space that is Jnana".* She *"explains the grammatical components of Theatre."* She is One *"Who has occupied the left portion of Lord (Siva) Who wears deadly cobras as ornaments in His forest-like (thick) matted locks"* and the Goddess Herself is *"wearing serpent whose hoods spit small sparks of fire as (Her) shoulder chain."* (Parvathi) who was *'Yama to Kaala"* (Lord of Death) himself, has *"Directions that are desires as Her apparel" and "holds Paasa and Ankusa in Her hands."* She *"shines with two Hands that depict Abhaya and Varadha".* "Ambai" has *"the greatness as that of mother who knowing the desires of Her devotees fulfils them instantly."*

The worshipful praise of Shakti thus goes on infinitely in Arunagirinatha's works, affirming the saint's limitless devo-

tion towards the Goddess and his abiding faith in Shaakta cult.

While remembering the Goddess in his hymns, Arunagirinatha quite often links Her with Her Divine Brother, Vishnu. For instance, in a Pazhani *Thiruppugazh "Iru Kanaga"*, the saint refers to the Goddess as *"Anantha Sayanakali Kooraari Sodhari"* (Sister of Hari Who reclines happily on *Adisesha*) and in a Thiruvarunai *Thiruppugazh "Amudhamooru"*., as *"Kuralu Roopa Murari Sahodari."*[15] The saint goes further when he describes Her as *'Thigiri Meru Kaiyali'* in the same hymn, meaning one who holds *Chakra* in Her hand. That the Goddess reflects *'Thirumaal Amsa'* (Element of Vishnu) is revealed by this description, since Vishnu is One Who has *Chakra* (the Divine Discus) in His Hand. Again, readers might have noticed that in *Devendra Sangha Vaguppu*, the saint has portrayed Parashakti as one who slew Hiranya. Here again, it was Vishnu, in the form of Narasimha, who killed Hiranya. The saint does not thus see any difference between Shakti and Vishnu.[16] That leads us to the discussion on Vaishnavism and Arunagirinatha.

Footnotes

1. *"Mayoora Kukkuta Vrithé Mahaasakthidhare Anaghé*
   Kowmaaree RoopaSamsthaané Naaraayani Namosthu Thé."
2. The first ever *Thevaram* Song which came from the holy tongue of Thiru Jnana Sambhandhar starts with *'Thodudaiya Chevian'*, namely "(Lord) who is having *'Thodu'* (ear-stud)". This ornament is worn by women and what the little child saw was *"Ammaiyappan"* (a combination of Mother and Father).
3. She is *Meenakshi* in Madurai, *Kamakshi* in Kancheepuram, *Maariamman* in Samayapuram, *Karumaariamman* in Thiruverkkadu and *Kanya Kumari* in Kanyakumari (all in South India), *Visalakshi* in Varanasi (North India), *Mahalakshmi* in Bombay (Western India) and *Kaali* in Calcutta (Eastern India). The Goddess also has shrines in several other holy places, where She shines with different Holy names.
4. Abhirama Bhattar was born in Thirukkadavur in South India some 270 years ago. Once on a New Moon Day *(Amavasya)*, it so happened that Abhirama Bhattar declared to the King Sarabhoji of Thanjavoor that that day was Full Moon Day *(Pournami)*. To substantiate his claim he sang

Abhirami Andhadhi (In *Andhadhi* type of verses, the last word of a stanza forms the first word of the subsequent verse) comprising 100 stanzas and when he sang the 79th stanza, the Goddess removed Her ear-stud and hurled it in the sky. Lo! The moon shone with its radiance! The king and the people honoured the revered poet. The poet also extolled the glory of Abhirami in his *Abhirami Pathigam*, in which he fervently appeals for the grace of the Goddess. *Pathigam* consists of 22 verses, each of 16 lines. In one of these verses, Abhirama Bhattar addresses his favourite deity as "*Kumari*, who gave *Kumaara Deva* (Muruga) who resides in all hills and blesses the devotees ever." We also notice similarities of the Goddess's descriptions by Abhirama Bhattar and Arunagirinatha in their hymns.

5. Those who have witnessed the famous Durga Pooja celebrations particularly in Calcutta would have noticed that along with the majestic idol of Durga depicted as slaying *Mahishasura* (buffalo-faced demon), idols of Ganesa, Lakshmi, Saraswati and Karthikeya (Muruga) adorn the holy spots.
6. See page 54 (Chapter 6).
7. See Page 55 (Chapter 6).
8. "*Kaalaanthaki*", as mentioned in couplet 19 of *Vel Vaangu Vaguppu*.
9. "*Thalai Valai*" - Kancheepuram *Thiruppugazh*
10. "*Karunai Chiridhum*" - Thiruvarunai *Thiruppugazh*
11. The reference seems to be to the dance performed by the Goddess in competition with Siva. When Her divine Husband performed *Voordhva Thandava*, at the end, femininity prevented Parvathi to continue further.
12. See Chapter 6, page 62 Footnote 15.
13. Abhirama Bhattar also refers to the Goddess's protecting the Fourteen worlds (Seven Worlds and Seven Seas) in the *Abhirami Andhadhi*. (Stanza 13).
14. The sequences of appellations and descriptions have been changed to suit presentation of the divine attributes in an appropriate prose form.
15. The reference is to the incarnation of Vishnu in the form of dwarfish *Vamana*, seeking three feet of land from the proud King Mahaabali. Assuming the giant Trivikrama shape, He measured the Heaven and the Nether World. To keep up the promise, the king desired that the Lord place His Foot on his head. Vishnu acceded to the request.
16. Abhirama Bhattar too has such unified perception, when he says in his *Abhirami Andhadhi* that the Goddess relaxes on the Snake-Bed in the ocean. (Stanza 35).

Swamimalai

CHAPTER 8

VAISHNAVISM AND ARUNAGIRINATHA

"Narada! Neither do I dwell in Vaikunta
Nor in the hearts of yogis
Settle I in those places
Where my devotees sing my glory" [1],

This declaration of Lord Narayana to Sage Narada clearly brings out the importance of *Hari Nama Sankirtan.* Realising the potency of the Holy Name of Narayana, which runs into thousand (Hence the name of *Sahasranama*[2]), limitless devotees, over the ages, have crossed the mighty ocean of *samsara* and obtained immortality by constant worship of the Lord through sacred hymns composed by them. Their devotional outbursts are indeed a boon to the suffering masses in *Kali yuga.* To list the names of such pious and liberated souls would indeed be a formidable task. Epics and other sacred texts mention the names of Prahlada, Narada, Paraasara, Pundarika, Vyasa, Ambarisha, Suka, Sounaka, Bheeshma, Thalpya, Rugmaangatha, Arjuna, Vasishta, Vibheeshana, Dhruva, Ajamila and Gajendra (the elephant) and many others who are dear to Narayana. Many holy personalities have subsequently taken birth, who obtained the infinite grace of the Lord and in whose lives certain dramatic events had occurred in one way or the other, revealing the Lord's abiding interest in them. In fact, a few devotees like Purandaradasa were brought into the holy assembly of *Bhagavathaas,* from their mundane existence.

The narration of a few instances which reveal the utmost devotion of these *Bhagavathaas* and the way Lord Narayana played into their lives might be apt.

Jayadeva, the author of *Geeta Govinda* or *Ashtapadhi* had a unique experience in that Sree Krishna Himself appeared in the form of Jayadeva when he had gone to the river to have

his bath and incorporated two lines in the seventh stanza of the 19th *Ashtapadhi*, starting with *"Chaaru Seele, Priye"*. Meera, who spent all her days in singing the glory of Her *Giridhar* (Sree Krishna) drank the deadly poison as directed by her husband and still survived thanks to the grace of her favourite deity.[3] Lord Rama paid all the dues on behalf of His disciple Bhadrachala Ramdas (who had spent the Exchequer's money in renovation of temple for Sri Rama) to the Nizam King Dhaneesha and got him released from prison. When Saint Thukkaram appealed to Panduranga to protect the Maratha warrior Shivaji from enemies, Panduranga took the form of Shivaji on horseback whom Aurangazeb's men chased mistaking the rider as Shivaji. While they were taken to a different location and most of them met with their end, Shivaji was meditating in peace in the temple of Panduranga in Pandharpur. The miserly jeweller, Raghunatha Rao whose sole aim in life was to amass wealth by lending money at usurious rates of interest became Purandara Dasa, the *Pithamaha* of Carnatic music and composer of many-a-musical gem with the Lord's divine intervention. Saint Tyagaraja, one of the renowned Musical Trinity, had received the *darshan* of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita. The young Godha or Andal, the daughter of Periazhwar, one of the twelve vaishnavite saints who sang *Naalaayira Divya Prabhandham* in praise of Thirumaal, was so intensely attached to Sree Krishna that she used to wear the flower garlands made by her around her neck first, fantasise her beloved wearing them and then offer them to Sree Krishna, Who accepted them gladly[4]. We saw the story of Tulsidas, the great author of Ram Charita Manas, in Chapter 2. The Saint Jnaneswara, the author of priceless literary work *"Jnaneswari"*, had made a buffalo chant *vedas*, in a crisis situation, with the grace of Lord.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Saint Arunagirinatha easily joins the galaxy of such pious vaishnavite saints and devotees, when one sees his brilliant narrations of Thirumal , His divine attributes, *leelas*, heroic acts and epical anecdotes in *Thiruppugazh* and other compositions. In all these instances, the saint sings the glory of Thirumaal (Vishnu) and addresses Muruga as the Nephew of such a

glorious, heroic Divine Personality. Some narrations are brief, while others are fairly lengthy. Stories connected with *Ramayana, Mahabharatha,* and *Srimad Bhagavatham* find places repeatedly in *Thiruppugazh* hymns. The way the saint has narrated them has no parallel. What appears elaborately in these scriptures are extracted and presented in beautiful summary forms, without sacrificing the essence of the original texts. Those who recite them get a clear, unambiguous picture of sequences. Simultaneously, they derive the benefits accruing from recital of the original holy epics. We shall see in this chapter a few specimens of such magnificent narrations.

(a)The entire *Ramayana* is contained in the *Thiruppugazh* hymn *"Aalahaala"* (Thiruchengodu). See how Arunagirinatha narrates the story :

(Sri Rama) (who was) "Born as the Son of Dasaratha
Acclaimed by heavenly subjects;
(Who) protected the Holy Sacrifice
Performed by the Supreme Sage (Viswamitra);
(Who) with touch of holy Feet
Transformed the stone (that was Ahalya)
Into its original form;
(Who) Smashing the bow in Mithila
United in holy wedlock
With resplendently beautiful damsel (Sita)'
(Who) On return to the town (Ayodhya)
Was directed by Step mother (Kaikeyi)
To proceed to the forest;
(Who) Went into exile
Accompanied by the younger Brother (Lakshmana)
And the Earth's Daughter (Sita);
Shot off arrows
Killing Vaali living in forest;
(and Who) Went in search of Raavana
And slew him."

The narration resembles a *Samkshepa Ramayana* (abridged version of Ramayana), justifying recitation as often as possible.

The *Thiruppugazh* hymn *"Kunagi Oru"* contains a brief summary of Ramayana, right from *Ayodhya Kaanda* to *Uddha Kaanda*. In this song, the saint brings before us the scenes of Kaikeyi telling Sri Rama that He is being exiled, the Lord's leaving Ayodhya with Sita and Lakshmana abiding by His step-mother's words, His killing of the charming delusory deer *Maareecha* and the brave Khara, Dhooshana and others, His slaying Vaali, building a bridge over the seas with the hêlp of Hanuman and other monkeys, crossing the ocean, Rama's destroying the demon clan, and His vanquishment of the angry Raavana, *"whose ten stone-embedded mighty crowns came tumbling down with a single arrow coming forth from the Lord."*

Besides the above narrations of the entire Ramayana in a synoptic manner, Arunagirinatha has touched upon several occurrences related to the epic in many of his verses. We notice the saint's limitless poetical imagination in his fine portrayal of Kowsalya beckoning the child Rama to her side with all her motherly affection and tenderness. (*"Thondhi Chariya"* - Thiruchendoor *Thiruppugazh*). Perhaps the saint's wish was to visualise and present before us the handsome divine form of Baala Rama, since Baala Krishna and His *leelas* are fairly well-known to devotees! There are hymns, among others, which refer to Rama's slaying of the demoness Thaataka, His converting the stone into Ahalya with touch of Feet, His keeping vigil during Sage Viswamitra's *Yagna*, encounter with Soorpanaka, Raavana's sister, death of Vaali at His Hands, despatch of monkeys to Eastern, Southern, Northern and Western directions in search of Sita, Hanuman's meeting of Sita in Lanka and his handing over of Rama's holy signet-ring, killing of Raavana, and coronation of Vibheeshana. Even the incident relating to Rama's pardoning the sinful crow[5] which caused injury to His Consort when He was asleep, and His awarding a token punishment to it when it fell at His Feet seeking mercy, is referred to in a Thiruppugazh verse. (*"Paathi Mathi Nathi"* - Swamimalai). The story

of Lava and Kusa, the young sons of Sri Rama, engaging in a battle against their brave Father and emerging victorious is mentioned in *Thiruppugazh "Piraviyaana"* (Chiruvai).

(b) Arunagirinatha provides us a wonderful gist of *Mahabharatha* in *"Modhu Marali" Thiruppugazh.* It goes thus :

"Dharma[6] lost kingdom following his defeat in the game of dice and accepted twelve years of forest life. While spending days with affectionate and comely Draupadi in Viraatarajya[7], Duryodhana and his men drove away with cows (belonging to *Paandavas*), which were redeemed after confrontation. (At the end of the stipulated period), a matchless emissary[8] was deputed (to Duryodhana), seeking the right to rule. The emissary returned when the request was turned down with the challenge of a valiant fight (to secure the right). The contentious sons of Dhritharaashtra, Duryodhana and others, who came to the battle were killed, while other kings and their troops were reduced to dust. The great Thirumal (Vishnu) acted as the charioteer to the victorious archer Vijayan (Arjuna)."

All the essential aspects of the story of *Mahabharatha - the victory of the right and virtuous over the wrong and wicked - are brought before us in a succinct manner.*

(c) Now let us have a look at the saint's description of the emergence of Lord Narasimha in response to the appeal of His young devotee Prahlada. We find this exquisite and rare narration in the *Thiruppugazh, "Iru Kuzhai meedhodi."*

"Whilst the scholar well-versed in Vedas
Taught "Hiranya Roopaa Namo",
The inimitable child (Prahlada) repeated;
"Hari Hari Narayana!"
[The angry father (Hiranya)
Questioned Prahlada]
"Who's that? What basis hath thou?"
(To worship Him)
"Tell me, Is He in this (pillar)?"

Said (Prahlada):
"He's the Leader present in
All objects in the Universe!"
Went (Hiranya) and struck
At a mighty pillar;
Out came with speed of hurricane
The flaring Narasimha
Who tore off the demon's body
With (His sharp) finger-nails."

Could anyone have given a better and clearer picture of the incarnation of Lord Narasimha and Prahlada's devotion? Perhaps not. What is outstanding in this hymn is the way the saint has contained the actual dialogues between the teacher and the pupil and between Hiranya and Prahlada.

(d) Arunagirinatha reminds us of the story of *Gajendra Moksha* (Emancipation of Gajendra, the elephant), contained in *Srimad Bhagavatham*, in one of his supplications *"Pagartharkkaridhaana"* sung at Pazhani.

Caused by Sage Agasthya's curse, Indradyumna became an elephant. When caught by a crocodile, the elephant in agony called out *"Aadhi Moolame"* (Vishnu). In the words of the saint, "(the Lord) *Who out of love came in the wink of an eye to bestow grace on the Elephant (Gajendra) which was caught by a male crocodile having sharp jaws."* The animal was thus rescued.

The Lord Krishna Himself has underscored the benefits one would receive by reading the story of Gajendra and it is our good fortune that Arunagirinatha has incorporated this pious scriptural piece in his hymn.

(e) In *"Kacchani"...*, a *Thiruppugazh* relating to Thirutthani, there is a beautiful narration of the *leelas* and divine personality of Sree Krishna. The saint, in this psalm, refers to Sree Krishna's removing the curse cast by Sage Narada on *Nalakoobaran* and *Manigreevan*, who had turned into *marutha* trees. Kesava, (Krishna) who had been tied (by His mother Yasodha) to a pounding-

stone *"as a punishment for desirously stealing curd from milkmaids' houses"*, went along with it and *"performed a benevolent act consciously"* (He along with the stone went between the two trees making them slump and they regained their human frames); *"Kesava, who rides on the brave Garuda mount"; "Achyuta (Krishna) who has His divine slumber on the poisonous snake (Adisesha) forming the Bed in the Ocean of Milk."*

(f) We get vivid descriptions of *leelas* of Sree Krishna in yet another hymn *"Thakara Naru Malar"* (Pazhani). The seven divine attributes highlighted in this song are : *(i) the Lord who played flute with expertise, while He lifted the Umbrella that was (Govardhana) mountain and herds of cows collected beneath it*[9]*, (ii) the Lord who went of His own accord to the house of Vidura*[10]*, (iii) the toddler who suffered beatings as a punishment for stealing butter, (iv) colossal Personality (Trivikrama form), (v) the slayer of the demon Madhu (hence the name 'Madhusoodhana'), (vi) the Lord having complexion as that of cloud and One Who holds Discus, Conch Shell, Mace, Sword and Bow and (vii) One Who danced with rhythm "Dhimita Dhimi" atop the gorgeous hood of the Serpent (Kaaliya)*[11].

(g) The heroic acts and the the childish pranks of Krishna are narrated by Arunagirinatha in the *Thiruppugazh* song *"Vanchanai Minjiya"* (Pazhani), He says, *"Thirumaal (Vishnu) who became victorious after His killing Sakataasura deputed by Kamsa,*[12] *who seated in a kurundha tree, engaged Himself in frolic with the womenfolk of cowherds' colony by making them blush*[13]*, and who (later) made them happy with His keeping company with them lovingly in His handsome form and with His music (flute)."*

(h) The saint has described in a *Thiruppugazh* verse[14] how even the animals, mountains, birds and trees underwent metamorphosis when they listened to the sweet divine music emanating from Sree Krishna's flute - the tiger cubs living in dens sucked the udders of cows, while tigresses suckled the calves, mountains melted, the trees in the forest blossomed, the passionate and outrageous male elephants walked off with their female counterparts and birds flying high up in the skies reached the ground.

(i) Arunagirinatha in his hymn *"Karuvin Uruvaagi"* (Pazhani) qualifies Sree Ranganaayaka (of Sri Rangam) as *"Peria Perumaal"* (The Mighty Lord) - the way vaishnavites refer to Him. The usage of this phrase proves the saint's familiarity with the

native customs relating to particular sects, apart from his desire to identify himself as a person belonging to that group, while worshipping their favourite deity. Arunagirinatha's devotion to Sree Ranganatha becomes further explicit when we notice the penultimate stanza of the *Thiruppugazh* song *'Kurudhipulaal'*. (Thiruvaanaikka). Here he qualifies Sree Ranga Raja as One *"at the holy Feet of Whom the Brahmins who are adept in Six Angaas* (Branches) *and yaagas prostrate, chanting "Hari Hari Govinda! Kesava!."* There is a reference to the Lord of Sri Rangam in *Kandhar Andhadhi* too. (Stanza 98).

(j) Arunagirinatha recalls the instance of gods and *asuras* (demons) churning the Ocean of Milk in his hymn *"Kaalanaar"* (Thiruchendoor), when he says that *"while Siva accepted the Aalahaala venom, Aadi Maayan (Vishnu) who has His divine slumber on the roaring seas joyfully distributed the nectar to gods who stood in fear, so that they might live (for ever)".*[15]

Arunagirinatha does not seem to be satisfied with the recounting of the wonderful feats of Sree Krishna. This is evidenced by his narrations, verse after verse. Seven such divine acts are incorporated in the *Thiruppugazh* hymn *"Muruga Mayoora"*. Sree Krishna is described in this hymn as One Who -

- sucked the life out of the fiend (Poothana) deputed by the sinner-uncle (Kamsa) who conspired to slay Krishna, disregarding the fact that Krishna was his Nephew (sister Devaki's son);
- twisted and severed the tuskers of the enraged elephant which advanced to attack the Lord;[16]
- with His valour made the fruits of *Vila* tree fall to the ground;[17]
- fought with the huge winged-crane and tore apart the bird's beak (to its death);[18]
- went crawling between the two giant *marutha* trees (and made them slump);[19]
- kicked off *Sakata* (cart);[20] and
- fought with the wrestlers.[21]

We get a sacred darshan of Vishnu in our minds when we recite the *Thiruppugazh* verse *"Paatrukkanangal"* sung by

the saint at the Muruga shrine at Paakkam. In this supplication, Muruga is addressed as the Nephew of Thirumaal (Vishnu) who *"shines with the sword of gold of unsurpassed purity (Naandhakam), the Chakra*[22] *or Discus (Sudarsanam), the Conch Shell (Paanchajanyam), the Mace (Kowmodhaki) and the Bow (Kodhanda) and is adorned with gold ornaments and Who reclines over the Bed that is the ireful serpent (Adisesha) with sharp, spear-like eyes, on the Ocean of Milk, tossed over by waves which look as though they are the extended arms that worship Achyuta (Vishnu)."*

The saint describes Vishnu as *"Thulaba mani maarban"* (the Lord Whose chest is adorned with Thulasi garland), *"Chakradharan"* (Who holds Discus),*'Hari'*, *"Murari"* (Enemy of Muraasura) and *Sarppa Thuyiladharan'* (Who has His slumber on the serpent - Adisesha), in his *Thiruppugazh* hymn *"Kalabamani"* (Thirumayilai).

The five incarnations of Vishnu, namely *Koorma*[23] (Tortoise), *Matsya*[24] (Fish), *Varaaha*[25](Boar), *Vaamana*[26] (the Lord in dwarfish form) and Narasimha[27] (the Lord in the form of Man-Lion Combination) find mention in a single *Thiruppugazh "Maadhar Mayal"*.

It was mentioned in Chapter 1 that Muruga's divine Consorts, Valli and Devayanai were in reality *Sundaravalli* and *Amudhavalli*, who were born out of tears of joy of Narayana, when He incarnated as *Trivikrama*. From this it becomes clear that Thirumaal (Vishnu) and His Spouse Sri Lakshmi are Muruga's Father-in-law and Mother-in-law. Arunagirinatha reminds us of this relationship (as distinct from his usual narration, namely Uncle-Nephew relationship) in his hymn *"Athala Chedanaar Aada.."*. Here he makes entreaties to his favourite deity Muruga to come before him dancing, amidst a large number of gods and goddesses and others (who too are to dance along with Muruga). After naming Adisesha, Meru mountain, *Kaali* (Parashakti), Siva, *Bhoothas* and fiends, Saraswati, Brahma, heavenly subjects and Moon in this category, the saint mentions about Muruga's Mother-in-law (Sri Lakshmi) Who is seated on the red lotus and Father-in-law, Who had taken *Viswaroopa*[28] (Universal Form) and lastly the (Lord's) peacock.

The saint proceeds further to give a fine portrayal of Thirumaal in the same hymn - Thirumaal who helped in the destruction of mighty troops belonging to the enemies *(Kauravaas)* who were challenged by Bheema carrying always the mace on his shoulders, (the Lord) who played His flute to bring back the herds of cattle which had fled in distress, (Krishna) who acted as the charioteer for Arjuna and blew the golden Conch *(Paanchajanya)* which gives out *Vedic* reverberations, (Thirumaal) who sleeps in the Ocean (of Milk) tossed over by waves, (Trivikrama) who has the holy Feet which measured the (entire) Universe, and (the Lord) who has *Garuda*, as His mount.

The saint remembers reverentially the *leelas* and heroic acts of Thirumaal on a number of occasions in his *Kandhar Alankaram* and *Kandhar Andhadhi.*

Arunagirinatha's other compositions like *Vaguppus* and *Virutthams* also contain epical anecdotes and other attributes concerning Thirumaal . These are presented below:

Name of *Vaguppu*	**Anecdotes/attributes referred**
(i) *Seer Paada Vaguppu*	(a) Gajendra Moksha (Emancipation of Gajendra, the elephant).
	(b) Incarnation of Vishnu as *Narasimha, Vaamana* and *Sri Rama.*
(ii) *Bhootha Vethala Vaguppu*	(a) Vishnu's Five Weapons (Conch Shell, Discus, Bow, Sword and Mace).
	(b) Distribution of nectar by Vishnu to Indra and other gods at the time of churning of the Ocean of Milk.

(iii) *Porkkalatthalagai Vaguppu*	(a)	Sree Krishna's acting as Emissary of *Paandavaas*,
	(b)	Lord's assuming *Viswaroopa* form,
	(c)	Annihilation of *Kauravaas*.
(iv) *Sevakan Vaguppu*	(a)	Lord Rama's slaying of Raavana.
(v) *Vel Vaangu Vaguppu*	(a)	Mahabharatha War and destruction of *Kauravaas*,
	(b)	Sree Krishna's acting as Arjuna's charioteer,
	(c)	*Gopi Vasthraapaharanam* by Sree Krishna,
	(d)	Flautist Sree Krishna's lifting of *Govardhana* mountain,
	(e)	Child Sree Krishna's going between two *marutha* trees,,
	(f)	Lord's slaying of *Sakataasura, Bakaasura* and *Poothana*,,
	(g)	Encounter with the enraged elephant sent by the inimical Kamsa, the Lord's uncle.

(vi) *Mayil Vaguppu*	(a)	Garuda's releasing Lakshmana from the *Naaga Paasa* directed by Indrajit (Raavana's son) (anecdote from Ramayana).
(vii) *Vel Viruttham*	(b)	The Five Weapons of Vishnu and His reclining on *Adisesha* on the Ocean of Milk, with Sri Lakshmi massaging the Holy Feet of the Lord.
(viii) *Mayil Viruttham*	(a)	Incarnation of Vishnu as Narasimha and reference to Sree Krishna as Devaki's son.
	(b)	Reference to Vishnu as the Enemy of demons, *Madhu* and *Kaidavaa*.
	(c)	Vishnu's Five Weapons.

Arunagirinatha thus excels in extolling the greatness and glory of Thirumaal (Vishnu) in his literary masterpieces. While doing so, the saint virtually identifies himself with the noble *Azhwars,* who sang *Divya Prabhandham* in Tamil in praise of Thirumaal . In fact, there is a school of thought which avers that Arunagirinatha consciously concludes many of his *Thiruppugazh* hymns with "Perumale" - an appellation usually ascribed to Thirumaal , (e.g. Srinivasa Perumal, Varadaraja Perumal etc,), out of his devotion to Vishnu. The greatness of the versifier lies in his extra-ordinary skill in giving graphic accounts of a number of notable occurrences which find a place in epics like *Ramaayana, Maha Bharata and Srimad Bhagavatham.* The range of the saint's coverage of such events is quite wide and his vision is incomparable. For instance, at one time he sees Sree Krishna as a toddler stealing butter and curd and getting punishment from Yasodha; on the next occasion he sees Him distributing nectar to

gods, assuming the form of Mohini; he then switches on to the scene where the Lord visits Duryodhana as the Emissary of *Paandavas* and later assumes the role of Arjuna's charioteer. The saint seems to be highly enchanted particularly with the Lord's incarnations as Rama and Krishna, judged by his repeated portrayals of these two divine forms and many heroic events relating to Them in several *Thiruppugazh* verses as well as other compositions. All these narrations are marked not only for their story value, but for their lyrical beauty and spiritual fervour too.

Prayers to Sun-God, as incarnate of *Soorya Narayana* (Vishnu) residing in Solar Orb (*Savitr Mandal)* form integral part of the daily worship by many devout people. Arunagirinatha has fittingly glorified the Sun-God on a number of occasions, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Footnotes

1. *"Naaham Vasaami Vaikunté*
   Na yogee Hridayé Ravou
   Madh Bhakthaa Yatra Gaayanthi
   Thatthra Thishttami, Naarada."
2. Arunagirinatha mentions this holy name in Thiruppugazh *"Anitthamaana"* (Thiruvaanaikka)
3. In Meera's own words, *"Vish kaa Pyaala Raanaaji Ne Bheja,*
   Peevatha Meera Haasi Re!"
   (Raanaji sent the cup of poison and Meera drank it laughingly).
4. Hence called *"Choodikkoduttha Naachiyaar"*.
5. Jayantha, the son of Devendra, is believed to have taken the form of a crow.
6. Dharmaraja (Udhishtira), the eldest of *Paandavas*; the others are Bheema, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva.
7. The pact with *Kauravas* was that after completion of twelve years in forest, *Paandavas* should lead one year's *'Anjyatha Vaasa'* (living *incognito*); if their real identity was found during this period, they were to spend another term of twelve years in forest. The *Paandavas* spent the thirteenth year in Viraataraja, assuming different names and taking up different vocations.
8. The reference is to Sree Krishna, who stood by righteous *Paandavas* in their struggle for justice.
9. According to *Srimad Bhagavatham*, Indra, the King of Gods, brought heavy rains in Ambadi, the colony of cowherds, which continued incessantly for

seven days. Krishna, who was just seven years old then, held the mountain aloft with His left hand all these days and protected the cows and their owners. Indra finally accepted defeat and fled and rains stopped.

10. The occasion was when the Lord went as emissary to Duryodhana. (See page 77 of Chapter 8).
11. The thousand-hooded black serpent *Kaaliya*, according to *Srimad Bhagavatam*, had occupied *Kaalindhi* waters and its presence made the surroundings obnoxious. Sree Krishna decided to send the irksome reptile away from that place and *'Kaaliya Mardhana'* followed. The Lord's act of subduing *Kaaliya* took the form of a graceful dance, accompanied by music and drumming by celestial subjects. Melppattoor Narayana Bhattadhiri in his *'Narayaneeyam'* has given a brilliant account of this divine dance in *Dasakam 55*.
12. Kamsa, the maternal uncle of Krishna, had become inimical towards Krishna ever since he heard an *asareeri* (voice sans body) prophesying that the eighth child of Devaki (Kamsa's sister) would kill him. The deputation of *Sakatasura* was a part of his plan to take the life of his divine little Nephew. The child Krishna was resting under a Cart (*Sakata*), when the demon sent by Kamsa, entered that cart and attempted to slay Krishna. Krishna kicked off the vehicle with His tender Feet, as if He was expressing His displeasure in not getting His food in time. In this process the demon met with his inevitable death.
13. The reference is to *"Gopi Vastraapaharanam"* ('Theft of clothes of *Gopi* women), when young Krishna took away clothes of womenfolk of cowherds' colony while they were bathing in Yamuna river and perched Himself on a nearby tree. The clothes were returned, when they shed all their inhibitions and made fervent appeals to Lord.
14. *"Kalabham Ozhugiya"* - Thiruchendhoor Thiruppugazh.
15. Vishnu assumed the form of a bewitching beauty, *"Mohini"* in this connection and hoodwinked the unintelligent demons while distributing the nectar. The transformation of Vishnu in the feminine form created a longing in the mind of Siva to see the graceful Divine Lass. The effulgent and powerful presiding deity of Sabarimala in Kerala, Dharma Saastha is the divine Offspring of Siva and Vishnu (in Mohini form). Arunagirinatha has referred to Dharma Saastha in Stanza 13 of his *Kolu Vaguppu;* he calls the Lord as *"Midalirai Viralari Vimalargal Arul Suthan"* (The Son of mighty Siva and brave Vishnu, the pious gods).
16. The elephant referred to here is *Kuvalayaapeetam*.
17. Kamsa had sent two demons to slay Krishna - *Kapitthasura* took the form of a *Vila* tree, while the other, *Vathsasura* transformed himself as a calf. Krishna flung the 'calf' on to the 'tree', instantly killing both the demons.
18. Sree Krishna's killing of *Bakaasura*.
19. See page 79 Chapter 8.
20. See Footnote 12 above.

21. Kamsa had invited Krishna and His Brother Balarama to his Assembly, when They had to engage in a wrestling combat with wrestlers like *Chanoora, Mushtikan* etc. sent by Kamsa. The Divine Brothers annihilated the opponents.

22. Legend has it that Vishnu worshipped Siva daily with thousand lotus flowers, seeking from the latter the *Chakra* which had cut across the neck of the powerful *Jalandharaasura* and killed him. One day when Vishnu found that one flower was short, He offered His eye to compensate for the shortfall. Pleased with Vishnu's prayer, Siva presented the *Chakra* to Him. These prayers are said to have taken place at *Thiruveezhimizhalai.* This occurrence has not escaped the attention of Arunagirinatha. The latter half of *Thiruppugazh* hymn *"Padar Bhuviyin.."* (Thiruchendoor) refers to this story.

    Adi Sankara has also referred to Vishnu's offer of an eye in lieu of lotus flower to Siva in his *Sivananda Lahiri.* (Stanza 82).

23. See Chapter 5, Page 49. Footnote 13.

24. The demon, *Somukha* had snatched the *veda* texts from Brahma and disappeared into the sea. Thirumaal took the form of a giant fish, went deep into the sea and recovered the *vedas*, slaying the demon.

25. Thirumaal took the form of a Boar and brought back the Universe that had been taken away by the demon Hiranyaksha, killing him.

26. See Chapter 7, Page 72. Footnote 15.

27. Chapter 8, Page 77.

28. The reference seems to be either to the colossal form Sree Krishna took and appeared before Arjuna during the Maha Bharata War (Bhagavad Gita - Chapter 11) or the Trivikrama form He assumed to subdue the demon King Mahaabali..

CHAPTER 9

SOWRA AND ARUNAGIRINATHA

(Oh! Lord Soorya!)
Thou epitomizeth Soorya Ashtakshara mantra;
(Who) Possesseth the body of golden hue;
(Thou art the very) Personification of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva;
(And) The giver of wisdom and deliverance!"

— Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar's
Nava Graha Kirthana[1] devoted to the Sun,
"Soorya Moorthé".

The Sun is venerated universally as the visible god, appearing as he is, before the people all over the world everyday. All animate objects derive their source of energy from the Sun for their very existence. The Four *Vedas* and epics extol the glory of the Sun and many devotional offerings and *mantras*, such as *Surya namaskara*, devoted to Sun, exist. The Sun bears seven names, namely *Savitha, Bhaga, Poosha, Vishnu, Kesi, Vaiswanaran* and *Vrishakapi*.

Raghu Vamsa, the dynasty of Lord Rama starts with the Sun. When Lord Rama's repeated endeavours to slay Ravana failed, it was *Aditya Hridayam*, an exclusive supplication in praise of the Sun expounded by sage Agasthya which enabled Him to vanquish the mighty King of Lanka. The sacred *mantra* expounded by the sage would bring forth victory, give immense benefits, destroy all sins and eliminate mental worries and bodily afflictions. The Sun has a central place in the astrological science. The presiding Lord of the highly potent *Gayatri Mantra* is *Savitha*, the Sun. The solar energy has come to be recognised as a prime source of energy, which finds application in an extensive range of areas. And the Sun has been one of the oft-repeated themes in the literary compositions of poets.

Tiruttani

Arunagirinatha has recognised the greatness and glory of the Sun, judged by the repeated mention of the Sun and other mythological anecdotes linking Sun in many *Thiruppugazh* hymns and other works.

Rig Veda declares the Sun as one of the triple Fires (*Agni*). Arunagirinatha has referred to these triple Fires, the Sun, Moon and Agni, which are the eyes of Siva. In the *Thiruppugazh* hymn *Kurudhi Mala Jala* (Pazhani), the saint portrays Muruga, *"as the Son of beautiful Daughter of matchless King of Mountains (Himavaan) and Who shares the left portion of the body of Siva, having three eyes, namely the Sun, Moon and Fire (Agni) and who is the Sister of Vishnu, the cloud-complexioned"*. The Goddess Parvathi manifests Herself between the Sun and Moon[2].

Arunagirinatha says, " The Lord (Muruga) possesses the Divine Form having brilliance as that of one crore Suns"[3]. "His holy and handsome Feet flash the brilliance as that of the Sun" [4]. *"His Spear (Vel) possesses the solar radiance"* [5]. The saint says with a magnificent poetical imagination that the dazzling Sun, perceiving the Lord's Spear, hides himself[6]. The Lord's six Faces shine with the radiance of the Sun[7]. Muruga wards off difficulties arising out of adverse movements of nine planets including Sun, says the saint in *Kandhar Andhadhi* (Stanza 48). In this, he refers to Saturn as the son of Sun. In line 22, he qualifies Yama, as the son of Sun.

While speaking of Muruga's mount, the Peacock and His banner, the Cock, the saint has made repeated references to the Sun. *"When the mighty bird traversed through the whole Universe, the solar regions were shattered to pieces and they flew heavenward and each Sun rolled and fled seeing the (Lord's) peacock at their proximity and Muruga, amused at this sight, laughed"*[8]. When the Cock, adorning Muruga's banner, roared, it hurt the Sun, who has the chariot driven by seven horses and it also scared the Eight Elephants[9]. While describing the radiance of Lord's mount, in *Seerpadha Vaguppu*, Arunagirinatha compares it to that of multicrore rising Suns.

Now let us have a look at the epical anecdotes relating to the Sun that are found in *Thiruppugazh* verses.

The episode of Siva shattering the teeth of Sun at the Daksha's *Yagna*[10] is referred to in *Thiruppugazh* hymn *"Adhi Madham Kakka"* (Kancheepuram) and in *Kandhar Andhadhi* (Stanza 23). The saint says that Muruga bestows benefits to brahmins who offer *Havirbhagam* (cooked rice) to the Sun - the brahmins who protect *Upadesa* and sacred thread and who offer water to the red (radiant) Sun which acts as its weapon to remove the obstacles created by demons (*asuras*)[11].

The saint is reminded of the morning worship dedicated to the Sun, performed by sages, when he prays at Thiruvanaikka Shrine[12]. Here he addresses his beloved deity as the Nephew of Sri Rama, Who killed the ferocious demoness Thataka, who came opposing Him while He was protecting the glorious *Yagna* venue in the forest inhabited by sages — the sages who, waking up at the morning, bathed and facing East, chanted meditational hymns on the Sun, *Aadityaya*[13], and offered *Tharpana* (offer of water), did Gayatri *japa* and made floral offerings.

Addressing Muruga again as the Nephew of Ramachandra (Lord Rama) and while narrating Ramayana briefly in the *Thiruppugazh* song *"Surul alaga bhaara"* (Pazhani), Arunagirinatha refers to the help Lord Rama received from Hanuman, who was *"the Minister at the Palace gate of Sugreeva, the son of Soorya"*[14]. That Sugreeva belongs to the solar family *(Soorya Amsa)* is also mentioned in *'Karuvadaindhu'* (Thiruparamkundram) and *'Gathiyai Vilakku'* (Pazhani) *Thiruppugazh* songs.

Two interesting occurrences in the great Mahabharatha War, having a link with the Sun find mention in two Thiruppugazh songs.

The first one refers to the occasion when Lord Krishna hid the Sun with His Discus. It happened on the thirteenth day of the battle at Kurukshetra. Jayadratha of *Kaurava* Forces had killed Abhimanyu, the brave son of Arjuna. A greatly sorrowful and infuriated Arjuna swore that unless he slew Jayadratha on the following day before the sunset, he would jump into the fire and die. Lord Krishna happened to witness this scene. When *Kauravas* heard about Arjuna's intention, they kept Jayadratha the next day in a protected seclusion.

Suddenly the darkness enveloped the battlefield and every one thought that the Sun had set. What actually happened was that the Sun had been concealed by the Discus directed by Lord Krishna. Jayadratha came out and with the hint thrown by Lord Krishna, the Divine Charioteer of Arjuna, the latter slew the enemy who had taken the life of his son on the previous day. When the desire of Arjuna was fulfilled and his life under threat was saved, Lord Krishna directed the Discus to return to Him and the Sun shone brilliantly, revealing that the sunset had not yet occurred. *Kauravas* felt let down by Lord Krishna's action. This incident is narrated beautifully in just three lines in a *Thiruppugazh* hymn[15].

The second incident deals with Lord Vishnu's giving *darshan* to Karna, who had been attacked by Arjuna. In Vayalur *Thiruppugazh "Kuyilo Mozhi Ayilo"*, Arunagirinatha reminisces this scene and portrays Karna, the fallen hero, as the King of Angadesa and the son of *"the Sun*[16] *who flashes thousands of dazzling rays, who is capable of erasing darkness at the sunrise and who moves in rapidity, being in possession of chariot driven by seven horses"*.

Thus we see in Arunagirinatha's *Thiruppugazh* and other masterpieces a liberal dose of devotional offerings and mythological anecdotes connecting the powerful and energy-giving Sun. The saint's respectful veneration of the Sun would equal that of those who worship Sun as the ultimate *Parabrahma*, the living god who makes his presence felt every moment. The survival sans the Sun is indeed inconceivable. As was mentioned in Chapter 1, Muruga's incarnation is comparable to the phenomenon of sunrise. One could imagine the magnitude of the brilliance of Muruga and His spear by the saint's description in several hymns that they equal the brilliance of multitudes of Suns. One single Sun situated at a far distant sky shines with extreme radiance and emits heat that is sometimes unbearable. The dazzle, potency and power of combination of several Suns that are attributed to Muruga proclaims the all-powerful nature of the Lord. Arunagirinatha establishes this truth admiringly in *Thiruppugazh* through repeated narrations linking Muruga and the Sun.

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Footnotes

1. *Sowraashtaarna mantraathmané Sowvarna Swaroopaathmané Bhaaratheesa Hari Haraathmané Bhakthi Mukthi Vidharanaathmané.*
2. *"Nirai Tharu..."* (Thirumayilai Thiruppugazh).
3. *"Vidha misaindhini..."* (Pazhani Thiruppugazh).
4. *"Surudhi Mudi.."* (Pazhani Thiruppugazh).
5. *"Pancha Paathakan..."* (Pazhani Thiruppugazh).
6. *Vel Vaguppu* (Stanza 6).
7. *"Aruvarai....."* (Vayiravivanam Thiruppugazh).
8. *"Jothi Mandhram..."* (Thiru Ambar Thiruppugazh).
9. *Vedicchi Kavalan Vaguppu* - Line 23.
10. Daksha, Uma's father performed *Yagna* without inviting Siva or offering Him the due share in the austerities. The enraged Siva caused extensive destruction to Daksha's *Yagna*.
11. *Kandhar Andhadhi* - Stanza 40.
12. *"Velaippol Vizhi..."* (Thiruppugazh).
13. *Aaditya* - The Sun.
14. *'Paruthi Magan'*, says Arunagirinatha. The legend has it that Rikshavirasa was a monkey which emerged out of tears of Brahma; when this monkey took a female shape, it had contact with Sun and thus Sugreeva was born. (*Abhidhana Chintamani*)
    Ramayana also alludes to Sugreeva as the Sun's offspring.
15. *"Seeraana Kolahala..."* (Viralimalai).
16. While mentioning that Karna is the son of the Sun, Arunagirinatha reminds us of the legend of Kunti, who with the objective to test the *mantra* expounded by the Sage Durvaasa, chanted it meditating upon the Sun. The Sun instantly appeared before her leading to the birth of Karna. As Karna is the son of Sun, he has *kavacha* and *pendants* as those belonging to the latter.

CHAPTER 10

KAUMARA AND ARUNAGIRINATHA

"Those who repeat the holy name of
The Lord holding the triumphant spear,
Friendly who is to (His) devotees and
Who wiped out the demon race;
Wouldn't get into the endless ocean of life
Nor would they suffer in this earth anguish
That stems from all-destroying penury."[1]

— Kandhar Alankaram
Stanza 33

Saint Arunagirinatha, as was depicted in one of the previous chapters, regarded Lord Muruga as the ultimate *Parabrahma.* To him Muruga was "the be-all and the end-all" and he treaded along the path of selfless love and unflinching devotion with the sole object to achieve his goal. In fact the mission to spread the universal love through the medium of *Thiruppugazh* was assigned to Arunagirinatha by the Lord Himself. The sequences relating to other deities like Ganesa, Siva, Shakti and Vishnu appearing in his hymns ultimately converge into a common Entity, namely Muruga. The singular and steadfast devotion of the saint towards Muruga is understandable, for, as we have seen earlier, Muruga was his Saviour and His intervention at a crucial moment changed the very course of the life of the saint - from a distressful and disgusted living to a highly elevated and blissful way of life.

Arunagirinatha never felt satisfied with his singing the glory of his favourite deity. However much he may sing His praise, the saint always felt that they were inadequate. His unfulfilled desire gets explicit expression in his hymns. For instance, the saint cries out passionately at Muruga residing in Devanoor[2] shrine:

"When shall I sing Thy praise to my heart's content, with my mind firmly fixed on Thee, as Skandha, as the great (Lord) Who has the Peacock as Mount, and as the Friend Who is held dear (both) by the deer-like Devayaanai, who was seated on the boisterous, mountainous, heavenly elephant (Ayraavatha) and the deer-like hunter girl (Valli), who resided in the hill (Vallimalai)?"

Indeed the divine attributes of Muruga are so vast and limitless that none can ever hope to succeed in his endeavours to glorify them to the full extent. Arunagirinatha's prayer referred to in the preceding paragraph corroborates this phenomenon.

Arunagirinatha's fine narrations on Muruga's handsomeness, His valour and heroic deeds, elegance of Lord's divine physical form, and innumerable epical references pervade through all *Thiruppugazh* songs and other compositions. The saint's excellent delineation of the distinctive divine features of his favourite deity could be seen in his *Thiruppugazh* hymn, *"Vizhaiyum manidharaiyum"*. The description resembles a miniature *Paadhaadhi Kesa Sthothra* (worshipful piece describing Head to Foot). In Arunagirinatha's perception as contained in this verse, Kumara's (Muruga's) six faces are inexplicable; His forehead is attractive; He has twelve long delicate flower-like eyes; ornaments like *chutti*, which are interspersed with gems, adorn Him; twelve pendants *(kundalaas)* shine dazzlingly; earrings are set with diamonds; His arms resemble lotus flowers; He wears a golden sacred thread; His adornments around the waist are worthy of laudations; His twin holy Feet (are venerable), the anklets are studded with pearls; (He is seated on) the gorgeous peacock, holding spear in His crimson Hand - the Lord is very embodiment of an all-pervasive beauty.[3]

In the *Thiruppugazh* hymn *"Bhuvikkun"*, Arunagirinatha furnishes twelve brilliant appellations of Muruga, all ending with a common word, "SWAMI", which in Tamil means 'Lord'. Muruga, as portrayed in this laudatory piece, is the Lord Who :

— appeared as the Son of Siva;

— dances atop the peacock;

— resides gloriously in our hearts;

— enables His devotees to see the brilliance of His Divine Form;
— cuts at the very root of births;
— smashes all sins;
— shines as the essence of austerities that sages perform;
— pardons (devotees') omissions;
— restored the heavens to gods and ensured them stability;
— annihilated the demons;
— has ordained the mission for me; and
— appeared in *Saravana* and acted as the Preceptor to His Father.

In a Viralimalai *Thiruppugazh*[4], Arunagirinatha presents an elegant portrayal of Muruga. The Lord's six holy Faces, which are worshipped by gods, carry the crowns studded with fine and distinct precious stones of nine varieties. His twelve shoulders reflect the prowess of mighty *Veera Lakshmi*. The two holy Feet exude the sweet smell of *kadappa* flowers, accompanied by wasps' singing of *Sree Raga*. The limitlessly affectionate hunter-girl Valli, and Devayanai, the daughter of Indra having cloud as mount, remain at the right and the left sides of the Lord, as stable support to devotees. The Lord's *Vel* (Spear) dispenses justice after probe. The saint also remembers Muruga's mount, peacock. Muruga's divine form, as depicted by Arunagirinatha, is the very personification of the Absolute *Jnana*, handsome and famed. It is so handsome that the saint regrets that the Brahma, the Creator, has not given him four thousand eyes to see and worship the Lord.[5]

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Muruga is the very fountain-head of the three branches of Tamil literature—Prose (*Iyal*), Verse (*Isai*) and Theatre (*Natakam*). Arunagirinatha reiterates this aspect in several *Thiruppugazh* hymns, Verse (*Isai*) is an important concomitant of Fine Arts. Muruga loves music - *"Isaip priyan"* as Arunagirinatha calls Him. In a Pazhani *Thiruppugazh*[6], the saint addresses the Lord as *"the Lover of Music Who destroys the penury and enmity of those who expound and recite Thiruppugazh and blesses them for success."* In *Kandhar*

Andhadhi (Stanza 98), Muruga is depicted as *'Raaga Vinodha'* or One Who loves music. In Thiruvavinan Kudi *Thiruppugazh, 'Naada Bindu Kalaadhi'*, the saint portrays Muruga as *'Geetha Kinkini Paadha'*, since the anklets adorning the Lord's Feet are tuneful. As the saint addresses Muruga as *'Isaip priyan'* and *'Raaga Vinodha'*, and he himself fantasises offering Him a garland, mentally created by him in his tongue[7] *(Paa-malai)*, it becomes clear that the Lord gets immensely pleased when devotees sing *Thiruppugazh* in melodious tunes.

Not only does Muruga love to hear music but He Himself is adept in the art of music. We come to know of this fact from what Arunagirinatha says in *Puya Vaguppu* (Stanza 17). Says he, *"the holy Hands (of Muruga) which aptly play the mellifluent ragas, Kaisikai, Gowda Varali, Dhanyasi, Dhesi, Bhairavi, Kucchari and Panchuram on the Veena with knowledge of the grammar of these ragas."*[8] There is a reference to Muruga's playing flute and Veena in Thirutthani in Skandha Puranam.

It is noteworthy that several *Thiruppugazh* songs possess the characteristics of prayers in the form of *Namaavalis*. In *Namaavalis* or *archanas* in Sanskrit, names of deity Who is worshipped usually end with *'Namo'* or *'Namo Namah'*. A scintillating *Thiruppugazh* verse, which has assumed the structure of *archana* with appellations of Muruga ending in *Namo Namah*, starts with *'Veda Vitthagaa'*. What is remarkable about this verse is that in addition to the prayers of Muruga, there are in-built worshipful praises of the Goddess too in this piece. The prayers in their entirety read thus :

"I worship Thee, worship Thee, the Lord Who possesseth profound knowledge of Vedas!

I worship Thee, worship Thee, the most Valiant who holdeth Velayudha!

I worship Thee, worship Thee, Who directed the frightening Chakra Vyuha (in the battle-field)!

The Brave Who constitutes Bindhu-Naadha!

I worship Thee, worship Thee, Who hath the holy Feet matching lotus flowers!

I worship Thee, worship Thee, Who wears garlands of Koodhala flowers!

I worship Thee, worship Thee, the Lord with complexion of clouds,

mounted on the peacock!

I worship Thee, worship Thee, Who is the Essence of Jnana of those who

hath attained the inexplicable State of Jnana!

I worship Thee, worship Thee, Who shines as the Five Elements[9] *and others!*

I worship Thee, worship Thee, Who constitutes a Whole!

I worship Thee, worship Thee, Who resides in all lofty and unpolluted mountains!

I worship Thee, worship Thee, Who possesseth broad shoulders, double of six[10]*!*

I worship Thee, worship Thee, Whose handsome chest is adorn'd with ornaments!

I worship Thee, worship Thee, the Darling Offspring of Mahadevi (Parvathi),

before Whom

Saraswati[11] *seated on lotus,"*

Beauteous Lakshmi seated on lotus with red petals,

Indrani[12] *and the whole celestial dames (gathered along with them)*

Stand and sing the praises every day

As "the Goddess adept in Vedas!

"Awesome!, Detached!

"Who holdeth in hand Veena, sublime and elegant!

"Who in the mighty Meru (mountain) abides gracefully !

"Who shares Siva's Body!

"Who hath applied sweet-smelling substances on the body!

"Primeval Shakti! Goddess who is eulogised by Saama Veda!

"Parvathi! Neeli! Goddess who adorns specked snakes that are huge!

"Mother! The Everlasting! and

"Durga with matted locks!"

I worship Thee, worship Thee, (Muruga), Who won fame by slaying Soora!

I worship Thee, worship Thee, Lord! Who is treasured by Vedic scholars!"

Arunagirinatha in several of hymns gratefully remembers the *Upadesa* he received from Muruga and *darshan* the Lord gave in various shrines. The overwhelmed saint, standing before the deity at Kudavaayil,[13] recalls his favourite Lord manifesting as Preceptor (*Guru)* before him and giving him the assignment to expound to the world, the stable, lofty and unknowable *Parama maaya* which stands revealed as *Veda,* (Tamil) prose and as its extended form, and possessing multi-lingual linkages; *maaya* that forms the very fundamental as well as the Centre and which is greatly supportive, renunciative, moralistic, expansive and the resultant; *maaya* which constitutes the bliss experienced by sanctified *Jnaanis,* and which breaks forth as cloud and the downpour, as the Sun shooting out rays of seven colours, the Moon, as the plentiful, widespread Stars, Ether, and Light; and *maaya* which represents a stage where days and nights do not recur. Arunagirinatha wonders whether he got this special favour as a result of the austerities he performed in his previous births.

While praying at Neruvoor[14] shrine of the Lord, Arunagirinatha remembers the occasion when Muruga appeared before him in Vayaloor, seated on the peacock and conferred His divine blessings on him; the grateful saint says that he would never forget in his wakeful and dreamy states, the lotus-like holy Feet (perceived by him then), where because of the fragrance that emanates, a variety of bees swarm about. He says yet in another song[15], "(Muruga!) *Whether I sink in the ocean or I lose my self, I wouldn't forget the majestic and matchless Upadesa Thou offered to me with compassion, once in Arunainagar (Thiruvannamalai) and Thy twin holy Feet."*

Similar thanks-giving is found in *Thiruppugazh* hymn *"Murugu cheri kuzhal"* (Thiruvannamalai) too.

A *Thiruppugazh* hymn sung at Vazhuvoor[16] incorporates details relating to Arunagirinatha's receiving *Thiruvadi Deeksha* (Blessings of Lord's twin Feet) as also *Upadesa*. In this prayer, the saint has given a graphic illustration of many favours he received at the gracious Hands of Muruga. The saint reminisces the Lord's placing of His Feet on his head in the early days of his life, the Lord's rendering *Upadesa* to him lovingly and His teaching of triple branches of Tamil (*Iyal, Isai* and *Natakam)* to him, which the saint says, even gods did not know. The saint acknowledges that it was Muruga who put him in the company of Lord's devotees and Who gave him the blissful divine *Yoga* experience and Who manifested before him fondly, sitting on the back of the peacock with brilliant plumage.

In the Seergazhi *Thiruppugazh "Kongulaaviya"*. the saint recalls his beholding the Lord's twin holy Feet adorned with brilliant and melodious anklets and the *Chakshu Deeksha* (the blessing by casting a glance) he received from his favourite Lord and affirms that he would never forget in his sleepy and wakeful moments this divine gesture, which was aimed at ending the increase in the futile days of his living.

Arunagirinatha presents a beautiful picture of the divine appearance of Muruga in his *Thiruppugazh* verse *"Poomaadhurame Ani"*, sung at Seergazhi. The song is in effect a quintessence of *Skandha Puranam* and is marked for its literary elegance. The epical anecdotes relating to panicky gods rushing to Lord Siva for help when threatened by demons led by Soora, the fervent entreaties of the harassed celestial subjects to the Lord for removal of their distress, the divine emergence of Muruga, Muruga's whirlwind trip around the seven worlds, the annihilation of Soora are all brought out admirably in this hymn; besides it contains the saint's own sincere prayers to Muruga. The hymn in its entirety, goes thus :

"Thirumaal, Who contains Sri Lakshmi[17] *in His chest,*

(Brahma) The four-mouthed who recites Vedas,

(Indra) The leader of legion of gods

And sages and others;
Went into hiding
Frightened by the mighty battling demons
Who explored not the (holy) Texts
That quest and explain
The essence of spoken Vedas;
Assemble did they all terror-stricken
And adorning (Siva) with garlands of paeans[18]
Entreated (the Lord) to bless them with an Adversary
(To destroy the inimical demons)
And prayed :
"Oh, Lord! lustrous is Thy Body
Spread with the Ash sacred,
And Thy matted locks are elegant with
Honey-filled Konrai flowers,
Jhaanvi[19] *with water bubbling handsomely,*
The comely Crescent, Cobra and pomegranate flower
And leaves such as Bilwaa, Naaval and Vilaa;
Thou alone art our succour!"
"(Siva) out of boundless compassion
Gave Thee, Velavaa![20] *(to the tormented world)!*
"(Oh, Muruga!) Mounted on the blue-feathered peacock
Thou in a moment
Came round the earth and six (other) worlds!
"Thou hath been the Commander Supreme of gods!"
Roams about this spiteful man
Devoid of Thy loving worship as
" The Lord Who is handsome as Manmatha[21]

" Whose six Faces match six (full) moons,

" Who wears the fragrant kadappa[22] *garlands*

" And who possesseth dazzling brilliance!".

" Protect me, Velavaa! the Lord

Who resides in the cloud-enveloped Seergazhi

Who holds the sharp spear
Which smashed once (Soora) the demon king!".

As was mentioned earlier, the primary purpose of Muruga's divine emergence in this Universe was to annihilate the demons led by Soora and free gods from their captivity. *"Having gone astray from the righteous path, Soora ruled the kingdom making the Sun, Moon, Yama, Indra, the Fire God (Agni), Nirrithi, Kubera, Vishnu Who wears the garland of dark Thulsi and the eminent Brahma, one and all - run about".*[23] Arunagirinatha refers to the heroic acts of the Lord and His vanquishment over the tyrannical demons in several of his hymns. The author came across a hymn,[24] where the saint has given a graphic account of the destruction of Soora and his men. With the valiant Muruga attacking the forces of demons, "the heads (of demons) that were adorned with garlands reddened (with the flow of blood); (their) protruding sharp teeth glowed white and (their) victorious shoulders blackened; the opposing Soora's chest was crushed and became charred; spirits leapt with joy at the sight of heaps of flesh strewn over the battle ground; demons collapsed on the ground, screaming in anguish[25] with scorched throats, blood flowed as a stream; the ocean shrank and dried with the heat of Spear (of the Lord); the *(Krowncha)* mountain which had indulged in tricks came down tumbling, pious men (gods, sages etc) sang the praises of glory[26] of Muruga."

What an impressive presentation of the battle scene! The intensity of Muruga's ire towards the foes and the supreme power of His *'Vel'*[27] could well be imagined from a reading of the saint's narration. The Lord's all-powerful weapon (*Vel*) not only pierced through the golden-tinged *Krowncha* mountain[28], it did not also spare *"the demon (Soora) who out of fear, jumped into the sea where the sharks collide with white conches and*

wash them away, and hid himself."[29]. Arunagirinatha brings to our notice a notable anecdote relating to *Skandha Purana,* namely Veerabaahu Thevar's diplomatic mission to Soora in another hymn.[30] In this hymn, the saint eulogises Muruga, as the Lord who is favourite of Veerabaahu Thevar, who, withdrawing from the Lord's forces, swiftly crossed the seaway between Tiruchendhoor and Mahendrapuri, the capital city of the demon king and entered the city as the emissary of Muruga without any fear of the demons and returned as elegantly as the Sun with red rays.

In Chapter 1, a detailed account of Muruga's holy wedlock with Valli was given. Valli was the foster-daughter of King Nambeesa of Chithoor, the head of hunter tribe. Even at the very young age, Valli had set her heart on Muruga and was determined that she would have none other than Muruga as her Lord Paramount. Simple and childlike[31], she had surrendered absolutely at the lotus Feet of the Lord, having no iota of the sense of 'I' and 'my' in her mind. Identifying herself as an integral part of Muruga, the Almighty, she pined for fusion with the Divinity. This is indeed the ideal and sure way of attracting Muruga and winning His infinite grace. As Arunagirinatha has underscored in several of his hymns, Muruga readily and willingly responds to the appeal of devotees showing absolute and unqualified devotion towards Him.

Arunagirinatha refers to a unique phenomenon called *'Valli Sanmaarga'* (the noble path adopted by Valli) in a *Thiruppugazh* song[32] sung at Vallimalai - the holy spot where Muruga wed Valli after a series of interesting encounters. We understand from the saint's lines in this verse that it was the concepts of *'Valli Sanmaarga'* that Muruga expounded to His Father, at the request of the latter. Arunagirinatha glorifies Muruga here as the youthful Lord Who in the wink of an eye speedily preached into the ears of His Father, the true hidden meaning of *'Valli Sanmaarga'*, when the latter (Siva) requested for it.

Thiruppugazh songs abound with narrations relating to Muruga's various playful activities as a prelude to His mar-

rying Valli. The hymns also reveal how dear the Lord held Valli, for the reasons stated earlier.

It was in pursuance of the news conveyed by Sage Narada that Muruga set about His mission to wed Valli. Arunagirinatha reminisces this part of the story in some of *Thiruppugazh* hymns.[33] The Lord's assuming different forms, viz. hunter, bangle-vendor (*Chetti), Vengai* tree and trembling old man, before getting the hand of Valli in marriage is referred to in a Pazhani supplication.[34] The saint calls Muruga as *"the skillful Skandha Who transformed Himself as the Vengai tree in the Thinai forest to the astonishment of the mountain-dwelling red-complexioned hunters who exclaimed "what a wonder!" (at the sight of the giant tree which was non-existent) and as handsome Vela Who is dear to Vallinaayagi,"* in one Thiruppugazh song.[35]

Muruga's extreme affection towards Valli comes into sharper focus in a hymn sung by the saint in Thiruverakam.[36] Says he in the concluding part of the verse : *"Muruga! Thou art the highly endearing youthful Lord, Who in a happy state of mind said to Valli, brought up in the hunter tribe which reigned the jungles: "Having cast a spell on me, thou doth not realise that the arrow that is thine eye stretching out to thy ear pierces into my heart; give up thy pride and bestow thy grace for the deliverance of my soul!."*

Arunagirinatha glorifies the holy Hands of Lord Muruga in the adorable hymn *"Puya Vaguppu"* as the Hands which engaged in *leelas* with Valli in *Thinai* forest; which held the Banner of 'Cock'; which played delectable tunes in Veena; which possess the inexplicable beauty, dazzle, valour and benevolence; which pierced the chest of the horse-faced *bhootha* to help Nakkeerar[37]; which ripped apart Soora's chest and became reddish with blood; which even surpass *Chintamani,* cluster of clouds, *Kamadhenu, Sangha Nidhi, Padhuma Nidhi* and the quintuple divine trees in granting boons to devotees; which drive away the messengers of God of Death helter-skelter in order to put an end to the cycle of births of devotees; which totally suppress the five sensory organs which shoot up and make one say egoistically "all actions were completed because of my efforts, not with the help of others!" and which slew the mighty army of demons, restored

the heavenly kingdom to Indra and protected the land of gods who surrendered unto the Lord. Arunagirinatha towards the end of this admirable supplication says in all humility that the Lord's holy Hands accepted and wore without any disparagement the garlands that are the silly-worded verses in matchless Tamil created by him with the right of a bonded slave, meditating upon the holy Feet of Muruga.

The holy Feet of Muruga are the solace and comfort of His devotees who are subjected to a variety of trials and tribulations in this world. Arunagirinatha on several occasions underlines the potency of the Lord's holy Feet, which alone are capable of giving deliverance to the human beings who are shrouded in the veil of illusion. Muruga's holy Feet are capable of even changing the course of destiny of human beings as ordained by Brahma at the time of their births; Arunagirinatha tells us so: *"Because of the touch of Muruga's holy Feet, the writings of Ayan (Brahma) on my head here have been erased."*[38]

The Lord's holy Feet are an enigma to those who try to comprehend them. While singing before the Lord at Uttharameroor,[39] the saint reminds us that Muruga's holy Feet are incomprehensible to *"Vedas, Upanishads, Aagamaas, the Guards of eight Directions, seers, Seven unblemished sages, the triple Luminaries, the unexplainable Prakriti and Purusha, the nine Protectors (Naathaas), subjects of distant starry world, vedic scholars, crores of fine cults, gods, hundred crores of disciples, Vishnu, Brahma and one crore masses of people, who all congregated and endeavoured repeatedly to comprehend Them."*

Arunagirinatha emphasises the glory of the holy Feet of the Lord in yet another hymn[40], which is characterised by a high degree of poetic imagination, besides being pregnant with meaning. Here he fantasises an offering of a garland, created by himself, at the Feet of Muruga. This is just not an ordinary garland. This is how the saint describes his floral offering:

"Muruga! would this man intensely devoted to Thee, get the privilege of offering at Thine graceful, coral-like crimson holy Feet, a flower garland which is of my mental creation - a beauteous garland having at its centre the lotus flower that is my mind, made

artistically at the place that is (my) tongue, using love as the thread and applying on it the sweet aroma of Jnana - the garland (thus created) shining brilliantly and the bee of faultless wisdom buzzing around it!". The saint by narrating the fantasy of offering the garland made mentally,[41] points out in effect the essential requirements for god-realisation; these are : intense devotion, conquest of the mind which is the source of wandering thoughts, selfless love, the tongue that is attuned to singing of the glory of the Lord, *Jnana* or knowledge about the attributes of the Almighty, the wisdom, the discriminating faculty, and finally the absolute surrender unto the Holy Feet of the Lord.

While Arunagirinatha has delineated the factors which help the mortals in winning the everlasting grace of Muruga, human beings, despite being endowed with proper faculties, often fail to utilise them to their benefit and thus continue to suffer indefinitely. The saint refers to this phenomenon indirectly when he laments:

"Oh, the zealous and mighty, handsome Lord of Thanigai, Who pierced the mountain (krowncha)! What harm did I do to Vedha (Brahma), who is never unjust, for his creating exclusively for me the head that does not bow in reverence at Thy holy Feet, the eyes that do not see (Thy handsome Form), the hands that do not offer worship (at Thy holy Feet) and the tongue that does not sing (Thy glory)? ".[42]

Arunagirinatha's devotional outpouring which goes under the caption of *Seer Paadha Vaguppu* relates entirely to Muruga's twin holy Feet and their matchless potency. This composition is regarded as most sacred by devotees to whom the Lord's holy Feet are far more paramount than the Lord Himself. And there are perfectly valid reasons for this perception, judged by the saint's lucid descriptions of the Lord's lotus Feet, in *Seer Paadha Vaguppu,* a few of which are enumerated in the succeeding paragraph.

Muruga's holy Feet radiate with brilliance of hundred crore Suns emerging from the ocean, on the back of the Peacock (the Lord's mount) at the end of *yuga* (aeon); They serve as a boat that enables me (says the saint) to cross the ocean of births which is a repository of sinful deeds and where I am tossed about by the waves that are wife and

children; the holy Feet which shine at the top of beautiful crowns of great gods; the Feet which are imperishable; well-suited to my (says the saint) mind; the Feet which strolled along the *Thinai* forest which was the abode of young Valli, well-trained in the art of shooing away parrots which flew in to eat the ripe *Thinai* corn, seated on the rostrum raised by hunters; the holy Feet that drive away the messengers of the God of Death defeating their mission; They show the way to attain the divine grace; Feet which help in fulfilment of desires; They strike at the root of innumerable hurdles that confront the devotees; the Feet which exude flowery fragrance; They bless (devotees) in securing the first place in all (arts); and They get drenched in the flow of tears of devotees who sing His glory, dance (in ecstasy), shed tears and surrender unto His Feet imploring: "Muruga! The six-faced Lord who was breast-fed by six *Kirthigai* maidens! Kumaraa!".

For devotees of Muruga, the Lord's hallowed weapon, *Vel* (Spear) has been a source of strength and solace and they worship the divine and powerful weapon of the Lord with as much earnestness as they worship the Lord. In fact in many-a-shrine, *Vel* is installed as an alternate to the idol of the Lord, and is worshipped.

Arunagirinatha has sung the praises of *Vel* repeatedly in his psalms. It is *Jnana Vel* as stated in one of the earlier chapters, given to Muruga by His holy Mother Parvathi with blessings to annihilate Soora and his army.

Arunagirinatha says:

"Realising that the soola held by the Lord (Siva) whose throat contains the lethal venom, the dazzling, triumphant Discus in the Hands of handsome Thirumaayan (Vishnu) and the Kulisaayudha of the King of gods (Indra) are (all) incapable of striking at the root of Soora and his kinsmen, gods and the Four-headed Lord (Brahma) stood and beseeched (Thee Muruga): "Oh, the Warrior! Let victory be unto Thee!"; the prodigious Vel (which surpassed all the three divine weapons in the Hands of Siva, Vishnu and Indra) possessing an unparalleled might pierced through seven mountains and the body of Soora in the wink of an eye "[43].

The saint calls the Lord's Spear *Vancha Vel*[44] (spiteful spear) - the spear which protects the virtuous who take refuge under Him and punishes the wicked[45]. It acts as poison to the demons and nectar to gods[46].

In *Vel Vaguppu,* an exclusive composition devoted to *Vel,* Arunagirinatha provides a vivid picture of the Lord's sharp-pointed spear. Apart from describing the material attributes of the divine weapon, the saint brings out its several characteristics which reveal that it is *'Vancha Vel'* referred to in the preceding paragraph.

Muruga's *Vel,* according to Arunagirinatha, resembles the eyes of Valli, the Lord's divine Consort. It follows that *Vel* would give the devotees all the favours that accrue out of Valli's gracious look. It has the brilliance of Sun, Moon and the fire that suppresses the ocean waters.

Vel protects the virtuous in several ways. The saint reminisces the Nakkeerar episode.[47] Did not the powerful weapon in the hands of the Lord free His favourite poet-devotee Nakkeerar who was locked up in the mountain-cave? The anguished poet's fervent outpouring which came in the form of *Thirumurugatruppadai* prompted the Lord to send out His *Vel* which pierced through the impenetrable mountain. The Lord's *Vel* again went to the rescue of Indra; the King of Gods and shattered the shackles that bound his legs. *Vel* wards off obstacles and does away with the fruits of past deeds of gods, sages, Indra, Brahma and mortals. The sacred weapon would stand by the devotees, as Siva's Lotus Feet, when Yama, the Lord of Death, appears before them. It would provide food to all the living beings in the Universe.

Arunagirinatha says that the Lord's *Vel* would *"guard me, nights and days, from all directions when I walk alone."* This is true of all devotees who worship Muruga.

Let us look at the way *Vel* punishes the wicked as Arunagirinatha narrates. Highly inimical to the vicious demons who dared to confront its divine Possessor, *Vel* provided food of human flesh (of demons who were killed in battle with Soora) to the delight of ghosts which fed on them and it wore the intestines of demons like garlands of red flowers. With an extreme poetic aesthetics, Arunagirinatha

tells us that the transcendent *Vel* smashed the ocean bounds, emptied the waters and after plugging the breaches it rejoiced by filling the area with the blood of demons. It flew speedily as a winged-mountain and attacked the demons even as their bodiless heads giggled and gnashed their teeth, their eyes displayed vacant looks and throats shrieked. The saint cautions that *Vel* would strike at the root of the kindred of those who display malice towards devotees of Muruga; and, it would remain the mainstay of devotees.

Arunagirinatha reminds us of the greatness of *Thiruppugazh* too in this hymn. He tells us that *Vel* would start off with rage to put an end to the enmities facing those who recite the inexplicably glorious *Thiruppugazh* and would help in stabilising *Dharma*.

Next to *Vel*, it is the Peacock, the holy mount of Muruga, that is venerated by devotees with utmost religious fervour. The beautiful bird which bears on its back the brave Lord is fortunate in that it is one of the three sacred spots[48] which experience the heavenly bliss arising out of the tender touch of Muruga's elegant Feet. Perhaps the avian creature is more fortunate than the other two since the touch of the Lord's Feet on its body is not restricted to only one time, but it occurs on every occasion the Lord travels which is not infrequent. The Lord's whirlwind trip around the Universe in a bid to get the gifted fruit from His Father[49] and His rushing to His ardent devotee Arunagirinatha, who challenging his opponent Sambhandhandan had promised Muruga's manifestation to King Prabudadevaraya[50] are two such momentous occasions. Arunagirinatha constantly remembers the divine Bird and praises its prettiness and prowess in several Thiruppugazh songs and fervently prays for the *darshan* of the Lord, along with His two Consorts seated on the back of His gorgeous Peacock. We get a clear mental picture of the Peacock by the vivid descriptions given by the saint in his hymns.

The Lord's mammoth Peacock is as huge as the Meru mountain with its height scaling that of Thirumaal (Vishnu) in His cosmic form (*Viswaroopa*). It flashes the bluish dazzle of river Yamuna which emerged from the holy Hands of the Goddess. Its feet are adorned with pearls and corals. The

velocity with which the mighty bird traversed the entire Universe surrounded by oceans in a split second made the unparalleled elephant (Ganesa) trumpet. The plumaged bird dances gracefully to the delight of Nataraja, Who performs the cosmic dance.

Arunagirinatha portrays the unsurpassed strength and greatness of the Lord's mount, when he says, *"Oh, the Peacock! Thou art the triumphant and glorious Muruga's (mount)! If only the Lord permits Thou to go alone to mitigate the hardships of the worldly beings, thou would cross the Meru mountain in the North, go to the other side of the ocean by spreading thine plumage in a round shape, travel beyond the Sun and the Moon and the golden-coloured Chakravaala mountain!"*[51].

The saint further adds: "The shocks caused by the attacks of the portly Peacock of the Lord of Thiruchengodu (Muruga), with thunderous roar on the hoods of Adisesha make the following lie scattered at the bird's feet, namely, the cluster of *carbuncle* gems, Thirumaal who protects the Universe (and Who reclines on the Snake-Bed), His Discus and the Conch Shell"[52].

Arunagirinatha has extolled the glory of Muruga's divine avian carrier in a scintillating work captioned *Mayil Vaguppu*. It was mentioned in an earlier chapter[53] that when no supplication succeeded in moving the young Muruga from His Mother's lap, it was Arunagirinatha's *Mayil Vaguppu* dedicated to the Lord's mount that ultimately brought the Lord to the scene, much to the relief of His devotee. In this composition, the saint says that *"the Peacock which remains worshipping the Lotus Feet of Lord of Thiruchendhoor (Muruga) lovingly", "lets off the two venomous serpents (Raahu and Kethu) which cause distress to the Sun and the Moon by devouring and then releasing them*[54]*, when the two serpents cry out of fear and yell that the Six-Faced Lord (Muruga), the Five-Faced Lord (Siva) and the Elephant-faced Lord (Ganesa) are the Gods Whom they worship; struck forcefully at the thousand and outstretched gem-studded hoods of Anantha (Adisesha) on whom the primeval Lord, Thirumaal, who distributed nectar to gods on churning of Ocean (of Milk) reclines and make them bleed profusely and its entire body to quiver; " fell uproariously on the fierce Garuda, which snatched the Naaga paasa*

(snake noose) flung by Indrajit, the son of Raavana, the dear brother of Vibheeshana, at Lakshmana, the inimitable younger brother of Rama, adept in all vedas; "tilled the soil of the entire Universe with talons of its feet even as the giant Adisesha carrying it swooned; "flew with fiery rage subduing the Eight Serpents (Ashta Naagas) living in eight directions as their boundaries; "humbled the joyous Swan with coral-like crest, which had worshipped fittingly with floral offerings the supereminent (Brahma) who had married the Maiden seated on the lotus flower (Saraswati) and which adorned the Banner of Brahma; "won all the battles waged even as bhoothas, Gandharvaas, Naadhaas and Kimpurushaas along with the entire body of ganaas stood worshipping and pounced upon several herds of elephants which felt as though they had lost their lives; and "made loud noise hearing which fear-stricken serpents worn by Siva, having an eye on the forehead, Who looked angrily at the upright Manmatha, the possessor of five flowery darts, and burnt his handsome body, collected and went inside the pits; (having done so, the Peacock) said to the Cock : "Hail thee (friend) who bodes the end of night!" and explained to it which stood in harmony with it, the war techniques that led to its (Peacock's) victory.[55]"

We shall now delve for a while into yet another magnificent masterpiece of Saint Arunagirinatha - "*Kandhar Anubhoothi*". This collection of hymns comprising 51 stanzas reflects the saint's blissful experience of *Jnana* (Knowledge) flowing from Muruga's divine grace. This unique composition brings forth the loftiness of the Lord's *Upadesa* to the saint and the supreme efficacy of Muruga's grace on the devotees.

Kandhar Anubhoothi is a prayer which richly deserves to be recited as often as possible. This encompasses the quintessence of philosophical thoughts that have arisen in Arunagirinatha's mind with the advent of Muruga's grace on him. The hymns are marked for their literary grace, meaning and substance, besides devotional fervour in an abundant measure. The constant chanting of this prayer, verily considered as a *mantra* text, would help human beings in casting off their ignorance and delusion and in realising the Eternal Truth of the Supreme *Parabrahma*.

In this composition, Arunagirinatha makes entreaties to his beloved Lord Muruga to free him from the worldly

bondages of spouse and children. The saint laments that despite his repeating the holy name of Arumuga, he had not been able to win over delusion that is the world and wonders if the lotus flower that is the Lord's holy Feet would ever blossom in his mind that is hard as a rock. He advises us that if we are to destroy sorrow and pain that afflict us, it is necessary that we give charity *(Daana)* and meditate upon the holy Feet of the Lord holding the sharp-edged spear (*Vel*). The saint implores Muruga to appear before him seated on His peacock when Yama, the Lord of Death, presents himself on the back of black buffalo to capture him. The saint reminds us that Muruga has no births or deaths and reminisces that when the Lord directed him "to remain silent", he forgot about all the worldly things. He tells his mind to eschew all desires and get rescued by remembering the Lord's holy Feet. Arunagirinatha exhorts us to sing the glory of Muruga, since it is He who has given us learning and knowledge; it is our duty to surrender these in His service because He has given us these faculties and this alone will be the wise act.

Reminding us about the fleeting nature of life, Arunagirinatha deplores his destiny because of which he is engrossed in the life in this world which resembles lightning which appears and vanishes in a moment's time. He says that the experience of self which has discarded the egoism and stands aloof stably is inexplicable.

The saint has offered a 'defamatory prayer' (*Nindhaa Sthuthi)* in this composition, when he says *"Oh, the God of peacock mount! Thou hath destined I should fall into the mighty whirlwind that is this miserable life. I don't know the reasons for being trapped so; could there have been any faulty actions on my part in the past (to justify this)? Be that as it may, long live Thee!"*. The *Valli Sanmaarga* ideology referred to earlier[56] also finds an indirect reference in stanza 36 of *Kandhar Anubhoothi* where the saint requests Muruga to preach him what the Lord preached to Siva.

Underscoring the greatness of *Sat Sangh* (assembly of virtuous men), Arunagirinatha asks his mind to join the congregation of holy men engaged in service of Lord Muruga

and strike at the root of egoism with knowledge that is patience. The saint bemoans: *"When would the triple desires*[57] *perish, thereby putting an end to the mighty seven births!*[58]". This gives us a precious clue that abandonment of attachment over mundane objects leads to cessation of cycle of births entailing different life forms. We learn from one of the requests of the saint to Muruga that he does not wish to go and beg before those men who do not disseminate to others the knowledge they have acquired out of their learning. Declaring that Muruga is his Mother and Father, the saint makes a fervent appeal to Muruga to wipe out all his mental worries. The saint wonders whether he would achieve the exalted position that transcends the thirty-six *Thathwaas* (Principles). Muruga, says Arunagirinatha, is dear to *Jnanis* who have shed the bonds arising out of worldly attachments and attained a state when the darkness of *Ajnana* (ignorance) has been removed.

The saint concludes this supplication seeking the grace of Muruga who manifests Himself as the Eternal Teacher (*Guru*), as one with Form, the Formless, the Existent, the Non-Existent, the Fragrance, the Flower (that spreads the fragrance), the Gem, the Dazzle (that emerges out of the gem), the Embryo, the Life Force, the Shelter and the Destiny. This concluding stanza enumerates all the essential attributes of the omnipotent and omnipresent Muruga.

The message that Arunagirinatha conveys to us through *Kandhar Anubhoothi*, in sum, is : Discard egoism, throw off worldly attachments and desires remembering the transcience of life, seek the company of devotees of Muruga and sing His glory - these will lead to a lasting blissful state of the mind and body, in perfect unison with God - the *Anubhoothi* stage which Arunagirinatha attained.

One can analyse the facets of *Kaumara* cult reflected in *Thiruppugazh* and other verses endlessly. So vast and varied are these that it is beyond one's capabilities to contain them in their entirety even in a treatise. To Arunagirinatha, Muruga is the sole and absolute *Parabrahma*. He did not think of any other deity except in association with Muruga. The saint derived immense pleasure, pleasure that is ever-lasting, in singing the glory of his favourite Lord. This he does in his

own distinctive style - a style which proclaims his rare individuality. It is this stamp of individuality that makes the soul-stirring *Thiruppugazh* songs instantly appealing to one and all. And the deep *bhakti bhava* (devotional fervour) makes them doubly attractive.

Muruga, as stated earlier, symbolises youthfulness, handsomeness, valour and fragrance. Arunagirinatha gives wide-ranging narrations on these attributes in several hymns. These narrations are combined with apt epical anecdotes. In fact one can easily visualise the scenes that the saint is describing, while singing the verses. Arunagirinatha reiterates on several occasions that Muruga is ever-compassionate to His devotees and fulfils their wishes in an abundant measure. As if to bring home this fact to us, he gratefully reminisces the occasions when Lord Muruga bestowed His grace on him successively. These brief autiobiographical sketches serve as a pointer - that those who make sincere entreaties to Muruga lovingly and devoid of ill-feelings and with a sense of absolute surrender unto His holy Feet can win His grace. The divine *Thiruppugazh* and other supplications serve as a sure means to achieve this objective.

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Foot Notes

1. *"Mudiyaap Piravi Kkadalil Ppugaar Muzhudhum Kedukkum*
   Midiyar Padiyil Vidhanappadaar Vetri Vel Perumal
   Adiyaarkku Nalla Perumal Avunar Kulamadanga
   Podiyaakkiya Perumal Thirunaamam Pugalbavaré."
2. *"Thaarakaasuran ...."* (Thiruppugazh)
3. It is interesting to know how different gods and goddesses were enchanted with the various facets of the beauty of Muruga. This is contained in the verse *"Kambai Murugan Pillai Thamizh"*.

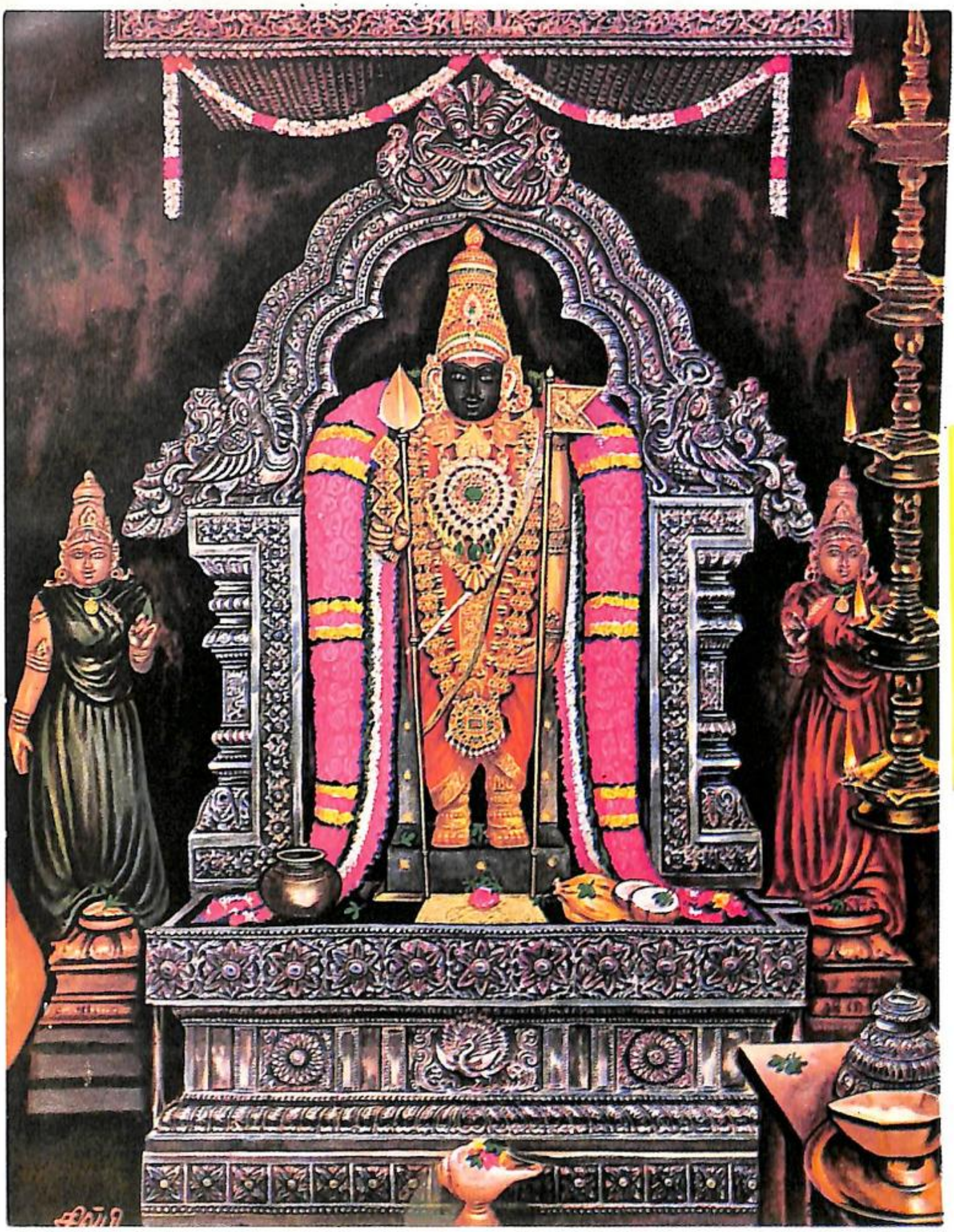
   "Sri Lakshmi, who is acclaimed by everyone as one possessing extreme facial charm, keeps looking at the beautiful face of child Muruga realising that Muruga's alluring face exceedingly outdoes Hers; Vishnu, having the complexion of dark clouds, who is described as the 'lotus-eyed' Lord, admires the beauteous eyes of Muruga, which are much more captivating than His; Saraswati, noted for Her melodious voice, listens avidly to the sweet voice of Muruga, finding that Muruga's mellifluous voice easily

surpasses Hers. The three-eyed Siva sees the beauty of the substance of the utterances of Muruga, who shines as the Preceptor to Himself (Siva); Brahma, on whose head Muruga once knocked with closed fists, is attracted by the beauty of Muruga's hands; Indrani, Devendra's consort, reminiscing the valour of Muruga Who by vanquishing demons protected her *maangalya*, is struck by the beauty of Muruga's shoulders; Devendra marvels at the beauty of *Vel* (spear) which annihilated the demons and gave him the heavenly kingdom; the pious devotees look reverentially at the Holy Feet of the Lord; Gouri (Lord's Mother) is delighted seeing the beauty of the Child's back and the Sun who looks at Muruga, appears diminutive before the enormous radiance of Muruga."

4. *"Seeraana Kolahala.."*
5. *Kandhar Alankaram* (Stanza 90).
6. *Karuppu Vilil....*
7. See p. 104 of Chapter 10.
8. Veena is regarded as the sacred and divine musical instrument in that it is in the Hands of the Goddess of Learning, Saraswati; Siva plays the instrument as referred to in a Sambhandhar *Thevaaram*; Goddess Parvathi holds Veena in Her hands as Arunagirinatha declares in a *Thiruppugazh* hymn and Muruga plays the instrument as seen in Arunagirinatha's *Puya Vaguppu*. And the holy traveller of the three worlds, Naarada, has Veena with him at all times.
9. Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether.
10. Twelve.
11. Arunagirinatha calls Her *'Naa Maadhu'*, "meaning the Goddess who dwells on tongue."
12. Indra's consort.
13. *"Surudhiyayai..."*
14. *"Guruvum Adiyavarum...*
15. *"Makaram Erikadal"...* (Thiruvarunai)
16. *"Thalai Naalir..."*
17. Arunagirinatha calls Her *"Poo Maadhu"*, meaning "Maiden who is seated on the (lotus) flower".
18. *Paa maalai* (*Paa* - hymn; *maalai* - garland)
19. *Jhaanvi* - River Ganga; since the river emanated from the Sage *Jhannu*, it is named *Jhaanvi*.
20. Velavaa - The Lord who holds *Vel* (spear)
21. God of love in Hindu mythology, whom Siva reduced to ashes with fire emanating from His third eye on the forehead, when he attempted to disturb the Lord's trance.
22. A flower.
23. *"Anri Vazhia"* ... (Thiruchendoor Thiruppugazh)
24. *"Olamitta"*... (Thirukkazhukunram)

25. Arunagirinatha says that the demons screamed *"Ayyo! Ayyo!"* - the words that come out when one is in deep agony or pain.
26. The laudatory words used by the saint are *"Ayya! Ayya!"*, the respectful way of addressing someone.
27. *"Sharp Spear (Vel) which sends out rays as those of a hundred crore rising Suns in procession, integrated as one". ("Avaamaru Vinaa"* - Thiruverakam Thiruppugazh)
28. *Kandhar Alankaram* - Stanza 19
29. *"Padhittha Chenchandha"* - Thirupparamkunram Thiruppugazh.
30. *"Kongaip Panaiyir"* - Thiruchendhoor Thiruppugazh
31. Arunagirinatha qualifies Valli as *"Kocchai Mozhicchi"* (one who speaks unintelligibly) in a hymn. (*"Pacchilai Ittu"* - Thiruvakkarai).
32. *"Kallakkuvaal"....*
33. See for instance, *"Yevinai Nervizhi"..* and *"Tholodu moodiya"..*, both Thiruchendoor verses.
34. *Vaadham Pittha...*
35. *"Aniccham Kaarmugam..."* (Thiruchendhoor)
36. *"Aanaatha Pruthivi"...*
37. Chapter 1, page 8.
38. *Kandhar Alankaram* - Stanza 40.
39. *"Suruthi Maraigal"*
40. *"Aasai Koor"..*
41. *"Maathrugaa Pushpa Malaa"*
42. Kandhar Alankaram - Stanza 76.
    This stanza is reminiscent of *"Thiru Angamaalaip Padhigam"* of Thirunaavukkarasu Swamigal (Appar), in which the saint tells different parts of his body to engage themselves in worshipful praise of the various facets of Siva, suited to their assigned activity.
43. *Vel Viruttham* - Stanza 2.
44. *"Madhikku Nerenum"....* (Thirumaanikuzhi Thiruppugazh) and *"Kongulaaviya"* (Seergazhi Thiruppugazh).
45. Compare Lord Krishna's declaration : "To protect the pious and to put an end to misdeeds (of wicked), and to establish *Dharma*, do I incarnate age after age." (Bhagavad Gita, Jnana Karma Sanyasa Yoga, Chapter 4, Stanza 8).
46. *"Aalamai Avunarukku*
    Amararukku Amudhamai"...
    (*Vel Viruttham* - Stanza 5).
47. See Chapter 1, Page 7.
48. See Chapter 4, Page 26
49. See Chapter 1, Page 4.
50. See Chapter 2, Page 19.
51. *Kandhar Alankaram* - Stanza 96.
52. *Kandhar Alankaram* - Stanza 97.

53. Chapter 2, Page 18.
54. It is believed that such 'capturing' of Sun and Moon by *Raahu* and *Kethu* causes Solar and Lunar eclipses at periodic intervals. The enmity arose at the time of gods and demons partaking of nectar got after churning of Ocean of Milk, when one demon sat among gods and started taking the divine liquid surreptitiously. Upon Sun and Moon pointing out this to Vishnu (in Mohini form), the demon was cut into two by Vishnu. Since the demon had by then already consumed the nectar, the severed portions of the body continued to have life in them. The bodiless *Raahu* later got a snake's body fitted on to it while the headless *Kethu* got head of a snake, when they both did penance seeking Vishnu's grace.
55. Free translation of the *Mayil Vaguppu* in its entirety.
56. Chapter 10, page 102.
57. Spouse, children and wealth.
58. Gods, human beings, animals, birds, reptiles, aquatic organisms and plant life.



Azhagar Koil (Pazhamudircholai)

CHAPTER 11

EPILOGUE

Muruga 'rose' in this planet, so that the Universe might get rescued. The immediate cause for the Lord's incarnation was to protect the heavenly subjects from the tyrannies of the mighty Soorapadma and his kinsmen who tormented the former and held them in captivity. The cruel demon leader was slain by the powerful spear of Muruga in the wink of an eye. This heroic act of the divine Supreme Commander put an end to the egoism and pride associated with these *asuras.*

The second reason for the Lord's incarnation, which is perhaps more significant, is His concern for resuscitation of the distressed mortals in this earth, who are tossed about by a multitude of difficulties and hurdles, besides being affected by a variety of bodily diseases through successive births. To achieve His purpose, Muruga sent Arunagirinatha as His chosen messenger to this world to spread love and peace among the people through His worship. The soul-stirring *Thiruppugazh* and other compositions in praise of Muruga, which came instantaneously from the holy tongue of the saint, served as the medium for the noble task which Muruga had assigned to Arunagirinatha, who also pleaded with his Lord for annihilation of human sufferings.

What is remarkable about Arunagirinatha is the manner in which he went about his mission. He took a positive and realistic approach while extolling the glory of his favourite deity and elaborating the virtues associated with the worship of the Lord. His ambition was to become a *"Siva Swaroopa Maa Yogi"*, where there was no room for *yogic* practices involving self-inflicted pains and distresses and foolhardy endeavours to prolong the transcient human life.

Arunagirinatha displayed equal respect for all religious cults and venerated deities relating to these cults with a sense of belonging. He becomes a saivite savant while worshipping Lord Siva, Shakti *upasaka* while singing the glory of Goddess

and an *Azhwar* while singing the praise of Lord Vishnu. This wholesome approach proclaims the magnanimity of his heart and provides a shining example for us to follow.

Arunagirinatha exhorts the worldly-minded through his supplications to eschew hatred, enmity and egoism and surrender unto the Lord's holy Feet. His exhortation for maintenance of amity and love among people is as relevant today as it was during the saint's life time.

Thiruppugazh is designed to bring about a tranquil and peaceful atmosphere, which serves as a soothing balm to the tormented souls. This is particularly noticeable when these songs are rendered in melodious *ragas* in chorus by an assembly of devotees in perfect harmony and *chandham* (specified time measurements), with single-minded devotion. The ecstasy experienced by devotees in such congregations bridges the gap between them and the Divinity. Simultaneously, the negative traits like hatred, egoism, pride, enmity, anger and jealousy vanish from their minds. The absolute strangers get bound by the sacred bond of *Thiruppugazh*. Gradually, the circle of such people widens and they begin to realise that they are leading a harmonious life characterised by love, happiness and peace - the noble way of living shown by Arunagirinatha - enjoying all the good things in life that one could reasonably aspire. The true personal experiences of many-a-*Thiruppugazh* devotee bear testimony to this fact. Verily *Thiruppugazh* is an ideal and easy means to secure the infinite grace of Muruga, the ever-merciful Lord.

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APPENDIX I

TRANSLATIONS OF SELECT THIRUPPUGAZH SONGS

1. Invocation To Lord Ganapathi

(Oh! Ganesa,) Bless me Thee
With kindness on my life
To drink many-a-time,
With my heart melting away
Like the celestial trees,
(Kaama)Dhenu and (Chinta)Mani,
The sweet essence of cognition
Springing up (in my mind)
That resembles the mellifluous nectar
Which surfaced the dazzling ocean !
(You're the) Lord who enter'd the forest
For the sake of the younger Brother (Muruga);
The Lord who secured the divine fruit
By circumambulating (Thy) Father (Siva);
The Lord Who manifests as
The stable support of devotees;
The Lord who hath five arms
And the head of an elephant !

('Vumbar Tharu Dhenu Mani')

2. Thirupparamkundram

Offer I do not prayers at Thee every day
Nor I speak of Thy noble attributes,
Worship I do not aptly Thy holy Feet
With flowers of many-a-kind;
Performed haven't I any austerities;

Knoweth I not the dwelling spot of
The devotees possess'd of hearts
That've won Thy ceaseless grace;
Come around do not I your Hill willfully,
Nor I yearn to sing Thy glory joyously;

(Muruga !) Come Thou in a moment's time
Seated on the back of the peacock to remove my fear,
When messengers of Yama,
The dark complexioned, and the highly enraged,
Appear (before me) close sitting on the neck of
The mountainous and mooing buffalo that comes by,
And encounter (me) with the rope that is flung (at me)
And the mace that inflicts pain
And I suffer (at their hands) with actions involving despair and the substance that decays restlessly, fading away

Oh! Vela! Waged war Thou against
The demons known as those with flowing hair,
Even as the vultures fed on the scattered flesh
That broke away from (the corpses') bodies
'Cause of the rejoicing dance of ghosts at the battlefield;

Oh! the Lord! Thou hath mountains of arms
Which carry the fragrance-laden sandal and kasturi,
Caused by the pressure on the saffron-worn bosom
Of (Valli), the beautiful girl of hill tribe and
Who hath voice that of a cuckoo
Which practises many-a-tune;

Oh, the Lord! Thou get pleased when
Brahma, well-versed in the four Vedas
Bathe Thee as ordained (in scriptures)
And offers flowers aplenty,
And the celestial subjects and
Sages who have won over anger
Worship Thee daily!

Oh! the Lord of Saravana residing in Thirpparamkundram
That abounds with glorious gardens
Where bees which make musical notes
Consume honey lovingly until they get choked!
('Unait thinam Thozhudhilan')

3. Thiruchendoor

Know not I the reason why some (men)
Dote on this delusory body
That decays with lust, anger and niggardliness
And the deviltry of the Five Elements;
And (also) to the worldly things as the mind dictates!

(Alas! They are in this pathetic state)
Without loving deeply
The status which transcends the countless Vedas
That show the way to attain
Thy lotus Feet which yield happiness and are handsome;
And the (exalted) status where hatred is non-existent
And the moral code enshrined with virtues!

Oh! the Lord of Chendhil! The brave (Lord)
Who wears Kadamba (flowers) and Who directed

The blue-necked and plumed peacock chariot
Which reduced to dust the ocean, Soora and Meru
And which carries on its legs the venomous snake;
Oh! the Son of Devi who bestows abode to
Those who perform austerities unfailingly;
The holy Preceptor who expounded yoga practices
And the leader of (all) dumb gods!*

('Chemakkomala Paadha')

4. Pazhani

If'er Thou make me fall into the birth
That's akin to the dark sea and the hell,
(Muruga) Bestow Thy grace and have a mind
To enslave me so that
The dumbness, blindness, bodily deficiencies
And even the slightest penury do not near me,
And the (lustrous) form of gods,
Lofty lineage, wisdom and just conduct accrue to me;
(You're the) Lord who directed the spear which made
The heads of vanquished demons
In the battlefield roll by,
The mighty ocean scream,
And the long (Krowncha) mountain smash!
The Nephew of the lotus-eyed (Thirumaal)
Who slumbers happily on the fierce snake-bed!
Kumara! the Son of (Siva), the dark-throated!
The leader of gods, who resides in Pazhani!

('Thimira Udhadhi')

---

* Arunagirinatha says it in a literary manner to focus Muruga's versatility and His supreme knowledge of all arts.

5. Thiruverakam

Oh! Kumaresa, (Who was) born out of grace of
The Lord with matted locks (Siva)
Who wears the Crescent, river (Ganges) and flowers;
(You're) The Husband who strokes the feet of hunter girl (Valli)
Who possesseth sugary and fruity voice !

The Nephew of Maayan (Thirumaal - Sri Rama) Who
Blessed (Kaakasura, the crow) by making it
(A bird) with a severed eye!

Let Kaala (Yama) not near me,
(Muruga) Bless me Thee (with wisdom) to surrender
At Thine Twin Feet.

Oh! The Youngster who came surrounded by gods
Mounted on the dancing peacock,
After freeing Adi Ayan (Brahma) and gods from their captivity
Enabling them thus to reign the heaven!

(You're) the Lord Who resides in Swamimalai
Teeming with mango groves
The Lord Who was deft to direct the spear
Which pierced Soora's body and drained the ocean !

('Paathi Mathi Nathi)

6. Thirutthani

How many births (have I taken)
(which were contained)
In the bodies of (the size of)
Little til, thinai and minuscule sand!*

---

* Millet

How many times did I get life
And live beneath the reverberating ocean!
Several varieties (of aquatic creatures)
Like the giant shark!

Not content with that
How many births have I had!
In mountains and ponds!
How many physical forms did I assume
Which fancied on the trashy bosom!
(Wonder I) If there is any limit at all for Yama
To snatch away the (successive) lives!

How many treacherous thoughts
(Did I nurture) in my heart!
How many families did I ruin!
How many living beings did I torture
In a beastly way!
Incalculable!

How many incidents (have occurred)
Which did not go astray from the destined course!
For my heart to melt at Thy lotus Feet,
(Muruga) Bless Thee henceforth (this man)
Who is mosquito-like, stubborn,
One in the company of dullards
And (Who's) possess'd of lust devoid of wisdom!

Vela! Thou did encounter (Soora)
Standing on the lumps of flesh

Even as vultures and wolves fed on (them);
And elephants, demons, horses and bows tore apart;
And blood springing at the battle field
Where the war was waged with ire
Swelled uproariously;
And the voice of victory of Maddhalam and Dhamaruka**
Which sounded singularly thus:
"Dhanattha natthana Dhana Dhana Dhana Dhana
Dhimitthi Mitthimi Dhimi Dhimi Dhimi Dhimi
Dhaguttha Kutthagu Dhagu Dhagu Dhagu Dhagu Dhagu Dheedheedho
Dharittha Ritthari Dhari Riri Riri Riri
Dhaduttu Duttudu Dadu du du Dudu Dudu".
Resounded like the roaring sea.

Oh! the Lord Who resides in Thirutthani
Whom the propitious and virtuous saivite savants
And the galaxy of sacred sages
Worship with honey-filled flowers!
The Consort of (Valli) the hill tribe girl!

('Chinatthilatthinai')

7. Pazhamudhircholai

(Muruga !) Come before me
Performing the dance of Jnana
That was not witnessed earlier
(Even) By Narayana and Brahma,
In order that (this man)
Who was born in this world
Resulting from past deeds

---

* Percussion instruments

Gets deliverance
With Thy kind assent to prevent
Kaala from nearing me!

Oh! the Lord Supreme of Devasena,
(The foster-daughter of) the Elephant (Iyraavatha) who is
As sweet as the bountiful nectar!
Oh! the Lord Who possesseth
Six holy faces and twelve eyes!
The Lord holding the dazzling spear
Which emerged victorious
Vanquishing the gang of Soora!
The Lord Who resides in Cholaimalai !
('Kaaranamadhaaga Vandhu)

APPENDIX II

Glossary of Thiruppugazh Songs

No.	Hymn beginning with	Location of temple	Chapter No.	Page No.
1.	*Aalahaala*	Thiruchengodu	8	75
2.	*Aanaatha Pruthivi*	Thiruverakam	10	115
3.	*Aangudal*		4	41
4.	*Aasai Koor*		10	115
5.	*Adhi Madham Kakka*	Kancheepuram	9	90
6.	*Alaga Bhaaram Aalaindhu*	Thiruchendoor	6	62
7.	*Amudhamooru*	Thiruvarunai	7	71
8.	*Ani Vazhia*	Thiruchendoor	10	115
9.	*Aniccham Kaarmugam*	Thiruchendoor	10	115
10.	*Anichevviar*	Vadamullaivayil	4	41
11.	*Anitthamaana*	Thiruvaanaikka	4 8	28 85
12.	*Anjana Vel Vizhi*	Thiruvaanaikka	5	47
13.	*Apagara Nindhai*	Thiruvavinankudi	1	12
14.	*Ari Ayan aria*	Vadugur	2	20
15.	*Ari marugoné*	Vayalur	4	29
16.	*Aruvarai*	Vayiravivanam	9	92
17.	*Athala Chedanaar Aada*		2 2 8	20 21 81

18.	*Avaamaru*	Swamimalai	4	41
19.	*Avaguna Virahanai*	Chidbamaram	6	51
20.	*Ayilappu*	Kancheepuram	1	11
21.	*Bhakthar Gana Priya*	Thiruchengode	4	41
22.	*Bhumiyathanil*	Kailaimalai	6	52
23.	*Bhuvikkun*		10	94
24.	*Cheer Chirakku meni*	Pazhamuthircholai	5	46
25.	*Chemakkomala*	Thiruchendoor	Appdx I	122
26.	*Chinathavar Mudikkum*	Thirutthani	4	41
27.	*Chinathilatthinai*	Thirutthani	Appdx I	125
28.	*Dasaiyaagiya*	Karuvoor	4	29
29.	*Edhamuru*	Viralimalai	4	40
30.	*Eluppu Thol Mayir*		6	62
31.	*Enai adaindha*	Thirutthani	2	20
32.	*Ethir porudhu*	Kodumkunram	4	40
33.	*Gathiyai Vilakku*	Pazhani	9	90
34.	*Guruvum Adiyavarum*	Neruvoor	10	114
35.	*Iru Kanaga*	Pazhani	7	71
36.	*Iru Kuzhai meedhodi*		8	77
37.	*Irul alaga*	Thiruvarunai	6	62
38.	*Irumalu Roga*	Thirutthani	4	41
39.	*Iruppaval*	Thirutthani	6	55,

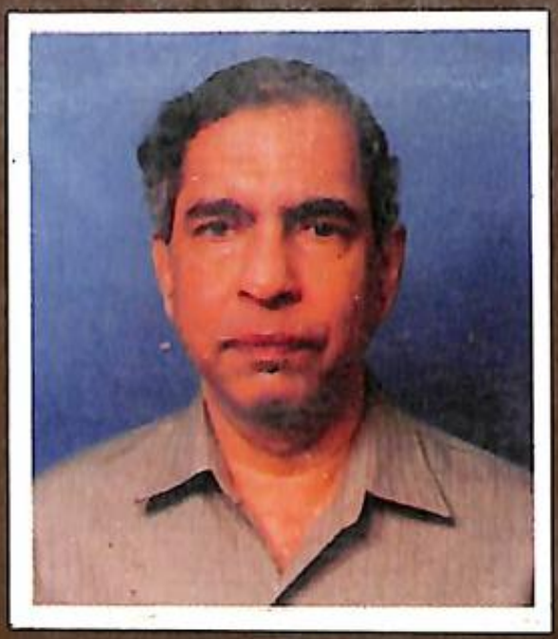
40.	*Jothi Mandhram*	Thiru Ambar	9	92
41.	*Kaalanaar*	Thiruchendoor	8	80
42.	*Kaaranamadhaaga*	Pazhamudhircholai,	Appdx I	126
43.	*Kaavi Udutthum*	Chidambaram	4	40
44.	*Kacchani*	Thirutthani	8	78
45.	*Kadalai Pori Aval*	Pazhani	5	45
46.	*Kaithala Nirai Kani*		1 5	12 44
47.	*Kalabamani*	Thirumayilai	8	81
48.	*Kalabham Ozhugiya*	Thiruchendoor	8	86
49.	*Kalahavizhi*	Periamatam	4	40
50.	*Kallakkuvaal*	Vallimalai	10	115
51.	*Kamala maadhudan*	Thiruchendoor	4	41
52.	*Kanakan thiral*	Thirupparamkundram	4	41
53.	*Karunai Chiridhum*	Thiruvarunai	7	72
54.	*Karuppu Vilil*	Pazhani	10	114
55.	*Karuvadaindhu*	Thirupparamkundram	9	90
56.	*Karuvin Uruvagi*	Pazhani	6 6 8	51 57 80
57.	*Kodaadhavanaiye*	Viralimalai	4	41
58.	*Kodiya Maraliyum*	Thiruchengodu	6	61
59.	*Kombanaiyar*	Thiruchendoor	7	66

60.	*Kondhala Olai*	Ilanji	6	62
61.	*Kongaip Panaiyir*	Thiruchendoor	10	115
62.	*Kongulaaviya*	Seergazhi	10 10	99 115
63.	*Kumbhakonamodu*		1	13
64.	*Kunagi Oru*		8	76
65.	*Kurudhi Mala Jala*	Pazhani	9	89
66.	*Kurudhipulaal*	Thiruvaanaikka	8	80
67.	*Kuyilo Mozhi Ayilo*	Vayalur	9	91
68.	*Maadhar Mayal*		8	81
69.	*Maaya Vaadai*	Thiruchendoor	5	46
70.	*Maccha Mecchu*	Chidambaram	6	60
71.	*Madhikku Nerenum*	Thirumaanikuzhi	10	115
72.	*Madhiya Manngna*	Chidambaram	6	52
73.	*Makaram Erikadal*	Thiruvarunai	10	114
74.	*Modhu Marali*		8	77
75.	*Moolum Vinai*	Thiruchendoor	2 7	21 65
76.	*Mughilum Eraviyum*	Thirutthani	4	40
77.	*Muruga Mayoora*		8	80
78.	*Murugu cheri kuzhal*	Thiruvannamalai	10	99
79.	*Naadha Bindhu Kalaadhi*	Thiruvavinankudi	6 10	59 96

80.	*Naraiyodu Parkkazhandru*		6	56
81.	*Neittha Churi Kuzhal*	Vayalur	6	57
82.	*Ninathu Thiruvadi*		5	45
83.	*Nirai Tharu*	Thirumayilai	9	92
84.	*Olamitta*	Thirukkazhukunram	10	115
85.	*Oru Vazhi Padaathu*	Somanathan Matam	3	22
86.	*Oruvarai Chirumanai*	Virinjipuram	4	41
87.	*Paathi Mathi Nathi*	Thiruverakam	4	41
			4	41
			8	77
			Appdx.I	123
88.	*Paatrukkanangal*	Paakkam	8	81
89.	*Pacchai yon giri*	Thirunallar	4	41
90.	*Pacchilai Ittu*	Thiruvakkarai	10	115
91.	*Padar Bhuviyin*	Thiruchendoor	1	12
92.	*Padhittha Chenchandha*	Thirupparamkunram	10	115
93.	*Pagartharkkaridhaana*	Pazhani	8	78
94.	*Pakkarai Vichitramani*		5	45
95.	*Pancha Paathakan*	Pazhani	9	92
96.	*Piraviyaana*	Chiruvai	8	77
97.	*Poomaadhurame Ani*	Seergazhi	10	99
98.	*Punamadandhaikku*	Kancheepuram	5	46

99.	*Seeraana Kolahala*	Viralimalai	9	92
100.	*Seeralasdan*	Pazhani	4	31
101.	*Seetha Vaasanai*	Madurai	6	59
102.	*Sikaram Arundha*	Mayapuri	6	52
103.	*Sivanaar Manam Kulira*	Thiruvavinankudi	1	12
104.	*Surudhi Mudi*	Pazhani	9	92
105.	*Surudhiyayai*	Kudavaayil	10	114
106.	*Surul alaga bhaara*	Pazhani	9	90
107.	*Suruthi Maraigal*	Uttharameroor	10	115
108.	*Thaarakaasuran*		10	113
109.	*Thakara Narumalar*	Pazhani	4 8	40 79
110.	*Thalai Naalir*	Vazhuvoor	10	114
111.	*Thalai Mayir Kokkukku*	Pazhamuthircholai	1	12
112.	*Thalai Valai*	Kancheepuram	7	72
113.	*Thidamili*	Pazhani	4	31
114.	*Thimira Udhadhi*	Pazhani	Appdx I	122
115.	*Tholodu moodiya*	Thiruchendoor	10	115
116.	*Thondhi Chariya*	Thiruchendoor	8	76
117.	*Udukka Thugil Vénum*	Kathirkamam	4	41
118.	*Unaitthinam*	Thirupparamkundram	Appdx I	121

119.	*Vaadham Pittha*	Pazhani	10	115
120.	*Vaatpada*	Aykudi	6	55
121.	*Vadhai Pazhaga*		5	46
122.	*Valivaadha Pitthamodu*	Thiruvarunai	4	41
123.	*Vanchanai Minjiya*	Pazhani	8	79
124.	*Varikkalai Inigaraana*	Thirutthani	4	40
125.	*Veda Vitthagaa*		10	96
126.	*Velaippol Vizhi*		9	92
127.	*Vidha misaindhini*	Pazhani	9	92
128.	*Vizhaiyum manidharaiyum*		10	94
129.	*Vumbar Tharu Dhenu Mani*		5	44
			App.-I	119
130.	*Yevinai Nervizhi*	Thiruchendoor	10	115
131.	*Yezhu kadal manalai*	Chidambaram	1	11



The deeply - stirred emotions of Saint Arunagirinatha before Lord Muruga, his saviour and beloved deity, took the form of sacred mellifluous *Thiruppugazh*. This study analyses the unique features of these hymns and highlights its devotional fervour and poetic beauty. The study also focuses on the unbiased outlook of the saint-poet towards cults other than the one he apparently professed and his profound concern for the well-being of humanity at large. The book is designed to serve as a guide to the devotees of Lord Muruga and lovers of *Thiruppugazh*.

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